Sunset

The Perfect Champagne Party P. 92

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5 Amazing Crab Recipes

14 Decorating Ideas for Inside & Out

5 Holiday Cookies to Share

Best of the SEASON

&17 Places to Get Away from It All

DECEMBER 2015



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Sunset
EXPERIENCE the WEST

December



Use succulents in a holiday wreath—the look is fresh, modern, and very Western.
HOMEMADE HEARTHS, p. 60

PROP STYLING: MIKHAEL ROMAIN

Photograph by THOMAS J. STORY

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Fresh-caught Dungeness crab, ready for the feast. Cover photograph by Iain Bagwell; food styling by Karen Shinto; prop styling by Nissa Quanstrom.

Sunset
EXPERIENCE the WEST

December



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GF: Gluten-free; **LC:** Low calorie; **LS:** Low sodium; **V:** Vegetarian; **VG:** Vegan

Our full guide to nutrition, ingredients, and techniques: *sunset.com/cookingguide.*



25 DAYS OF GIVEAWAYS

We're giving away our gift guide, straight from the pages of this magazine! We'll also have votives from Glassybaby; old-fashioned Italian bites from Cookies con Amore; and high-tech goodies too. Follow us on our Facebook page and Instagram *@sunsetmag* to learn more. Visit *sunset.com/holidaygiveaway* for a chance to win.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LISA CORSON; ERIN KUNKEL (FOOD STYLING: KAREN SHINTO; PROP STYLING: KELLY ALLEN); JEFFERY CROSS



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THE SEASON FOR MEMORIES



December issues, found in the archives: "Gee Whiz! Some Christmas Trees!"1916; wreath and adobe house, 1934; "Santa Claus Off the Range on Christmas Day," 1904.

THERE'S ONE Christmas ornament I'm anxious to find each year. Made by my daughter in the first grade (she's 22 now), it's a slightly misshapen six-pointed star constructed of popsicle sticks, decorated with blue and red sequins, and studded, inexplicably, with plastic shark's teeth. This childhood relic has survived every insult: our long-gone cat's repeated attacks; the year the top-heavy tree crashed to the floor in the middle of the night; our cross-country move three years ago.

This beautifully bedraggled holiday treasure has come to sum up for me our family life and traditions. I love its goofy and utterly personal character—and the memories it helps me hold of Christmases past, younger children, houses and neighbors left behind but beloved.

As we put this holiday issue of *Sunset* to bed, we are surrounded by mementos of our building in Menlo Park, California, which we are about to vacate for new headquarters in Oakland. Some of the things we're unearthing from closets and storerooms are as wondrously weird as my shark's-teeth star. Creative director Maili Holiman has mounted rotating displays of odd finds from the growing giveaway pile (why on Earth do we have a Mr. T coloring book?). Food editor Margo True found a basket of tiny "first eggs" from our (mostly departed) chickens. Senior food editor Elaine Johnson came across not only an uncirculated first edition of our 1938 camp cookbook (complete with a cover made of redwood), but ephemera from the post-earthquake 1906 Stanford-Cal rugby game as well. Also among the discoveries are 100 crab crackers, a building-tour script for the *Sunset* "hostesses" of yore, a giant cookie cutter featuring our logo ... you get the picture.

I will carry so many memories with me when we leave the building. We've accomplished a lot inside these walls, and I'm grateful that I've been able to play a small role in the magazine's great 117-year history. It's fitting that our move coincides with another of mine: This issue is my last as editor (Irene Edwards takes the reins for the January issue). *Sunset* brought me back to the West that I love, and now I'll have time to get out there and enjoy it.

PEGGY NORTHROP, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF | *readerletters@sunset.com*



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FROM LEFT: E. SPENCER TOY; THOMAS J. STORY



Roasted Vegetables with Walnuts, Basil & Balsamic Vinaigrette



Pomegranate Glazed Carrots

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Sweet & Spicy Brussels Sprouts

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BEST OF THE WEST

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING THIS MONTH



BEST REVIVAL





A SECOND CHANCE

When we heard that Clifton's Cabinet of Curiosities was soon to reopen, we were intrigued and relieved. Founded in 1932, the downtown L.A. cafeteria was Clifford Clinton's attempt to bring elegant dining to struggling working people, and it worked—if you think of elegant dining as including giant plaster of paris mountainsides and artificial forests. Which we do. Unveiled on October 2, the revamped landmark will ultimately encompass four over-the-top floors and, yes, the cafeteria's iconic Jell-O, thanks to chef Jason Fullilove. (That's him up at the top, with the lion.) But what won our hearts was the fact that, although the famous pay-what-you-could policy is history, the new owner, nightclub baron Andrew Meieran, has committed to hiring no less than 10 percent of his staff, forever, from among the graduates of such local recovery programs as The Midnight Mission and CORE. Bravo. *$; 648 S. Broadway; cliftonsla.com.*

Photographs by **LISA CORSON**



BEST APRÈS-SKI WARM-UP

STEAM HEAT

Stopping at Glenwood Hot Springs after a snowy day on the Western Slope is part of Coloradans' DNA. After all, that red sandstone bathhouse and vast pool date back to the late 1880s—right after the town of Glenwood Springs was founded. As of August, though, the grande dame has competition. About a mile west, the new Iron Mountain Hot Springs complex divides to conquer, offering 16 pools, all fed by the town's 122° waters. And the park-style bathhouse, all shingles and slate, adds just the right rustic note. *Day pass $20; ironmountainhotsprings.com.*



BEST INCUBATOR

It takes a village...

Or maybe just a restaurant. Back in 2009, Tender Greens, a "fine casual" chain based in Culver City, began hiring teens who were too old for foster care but far from independence. In 2012, the company launched what it calls the Sustainable Life Project: an internship program for such kids that goes way beyond teaching them to cook. In a six-month stint, interns work in a Tender Greens kitchen, go on field trips to farms, learn how to manage their paycheck, and develop those skills that so many of us take for granted. Most important, they gain a support network of coworker-mentors—as well as, often, a full-time job. *tendergreens.com.*

BEST GIFT FOR HOMEBODIES

Instant staycation

High on both the cozy and the cute factor, this hook pillow from Portland's Budd + Finn is a reminder of roads traveled in warmer weather—or a little piece of the Airstream we all want. (Even four-legged family members, but they're covered on page 14.) *$60; buddfinn.com.*



TASTING THE SEASON

BEST BREWS

If you're one of those beer lovers who counts the days till Anchor Brewing and Sierra Nevada release their winter brews, you may want to get yourself to Portland the first week of December. That's when the 20th annual Holiday Ale Festival moves into Pioneer Courthouse Square, with some 50 craft breweries from around the West tapping kegs of their seasonal specials. How special are they? Most were made expressly for this event, and not a one will appear on store shelves. Can't make it? Console yourself with a bottle of Anchor's 41st annual Christmas Ale. *$35; Dec 2–6; holidayale.com.*



BEST GIFT FOR MUSIC LOVERS

MACHINE LEARNING

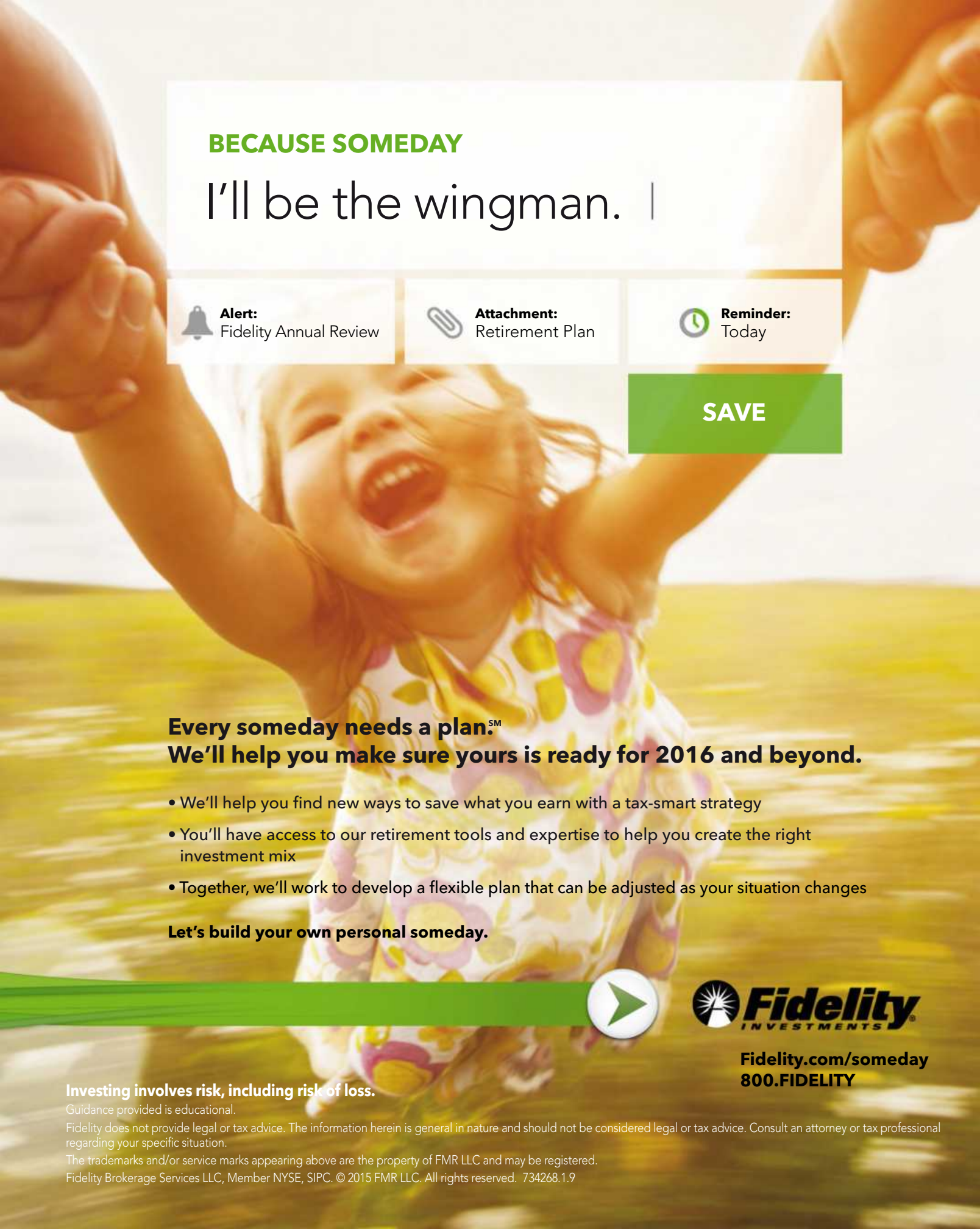
What, exactly, is the Aether Cone? Think of it as a portable speaker deejayed by Siri. Turn on the Cone, which is linked to the Rdio music streaming service, and tell it what you want to hear. ("Play 'Sideways' by Citizen Cope.") The Cone learns your likes and dislikes: Touch the center "power" button, and it'll cue up your favorite breakfast-time podcast, or your usual cooking-dinner background music, depending on your past behavior and listening patterns. (The Cone uses a built-in accelerometer to orient itself.) And with this, we're one step closer to living on the starship *Enterprise. $399; aether.com.*



BEST READ

Ask a bookseller This month's pick—*The Wild Edge: Freedom to Roam the Pacific Coast* (Mountaineers Books; $40) by Florian Schulz—comes from Melinda Powers of Bookshop Santa Cruz, California. "A beautiful book about the wildlife corridor that runs along the Pacific Coast, from the Baja Peninsula to the Beaufort Sea. Highlighting the migratory patterns of not only gray whales but also caribou, birds, butterflies, and more, it underscores our interconnectedness as it stops at each of the ecosystems through Baja California, the Northwest, and beyond. Filled with essays, local profiles, and gorgeous full-page nature photos, *The Wild Edge* invites us into a world of incredible life and calls upon us to help in its conservation."

TENDER GREENS: JULIE ANN FINEMAN; PILLOW: JEFFERY CROSS; BOOK: E. SPENCER TOY



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RETRO COOL

BEST GIFT FOR PARK LOVERS

Kick off the National Park Service's 100th anniversary year with the See America calendar, a project of the Creative Action Network, which is based in the Bay Area. The destinations featured aren't exclusively Western, of course—rumor has it, some perfectly lovely landscapes do exist elsewhere in our nation. Not surprisingly, though, such landmarks as Yosemite and Depoe Bay in Oregon loom large on these pages. *See America: $14; pageaday.com.*





BEST LIGHTS

Illumination night

Making a virtue of these long winter nights, British artist Bruce Munro is bringing his light-art installations to the greater Phoenix area as part of a project he calls *Desert Radiance.* Since early November, *Blooms*, a bouquet of splash-shaped fiber-optic sculptures, has been floating on a Scottsdale stretch of the Arizona Canal, but the most ambitious part of the project takes place among the cactus at Phoenix's Desert Botanical Garden. There, on November 22, switches were flipped on eight of his best-known works—among them *Field of Light,* a network of dandelion-like LEDs so vast, it's visible from planes landing at nearby Sky Harbor International Airport. See them soon: Come spring, these artworks will go dark. *SMOCA: $7; smoca.org. Botanical Garden: $25; dbg.org.*



BEST APPEARING ACT

Liquid magic

Giving Seattleites something to look forward to when the clouds roll in, Peregrine Church and his merry band of artists spent much of last winter creating what they call Rainworks. Using a hydrophobic substance, they sprayed designs on the sidewalk that become visible only when wet. (The safe, biodegradable coating wears off after a few months.) This fall, the group raised enough money via Kickstarter to begin distributing the spray to the public, so all can join in the fun. Because no matter how impatient we Westerners are for El Niño to arrive, the ensuing gray, gloomy weather might eventually feel a bit, well, gloomy. *$29/spray and stencil kit; rain.works.*

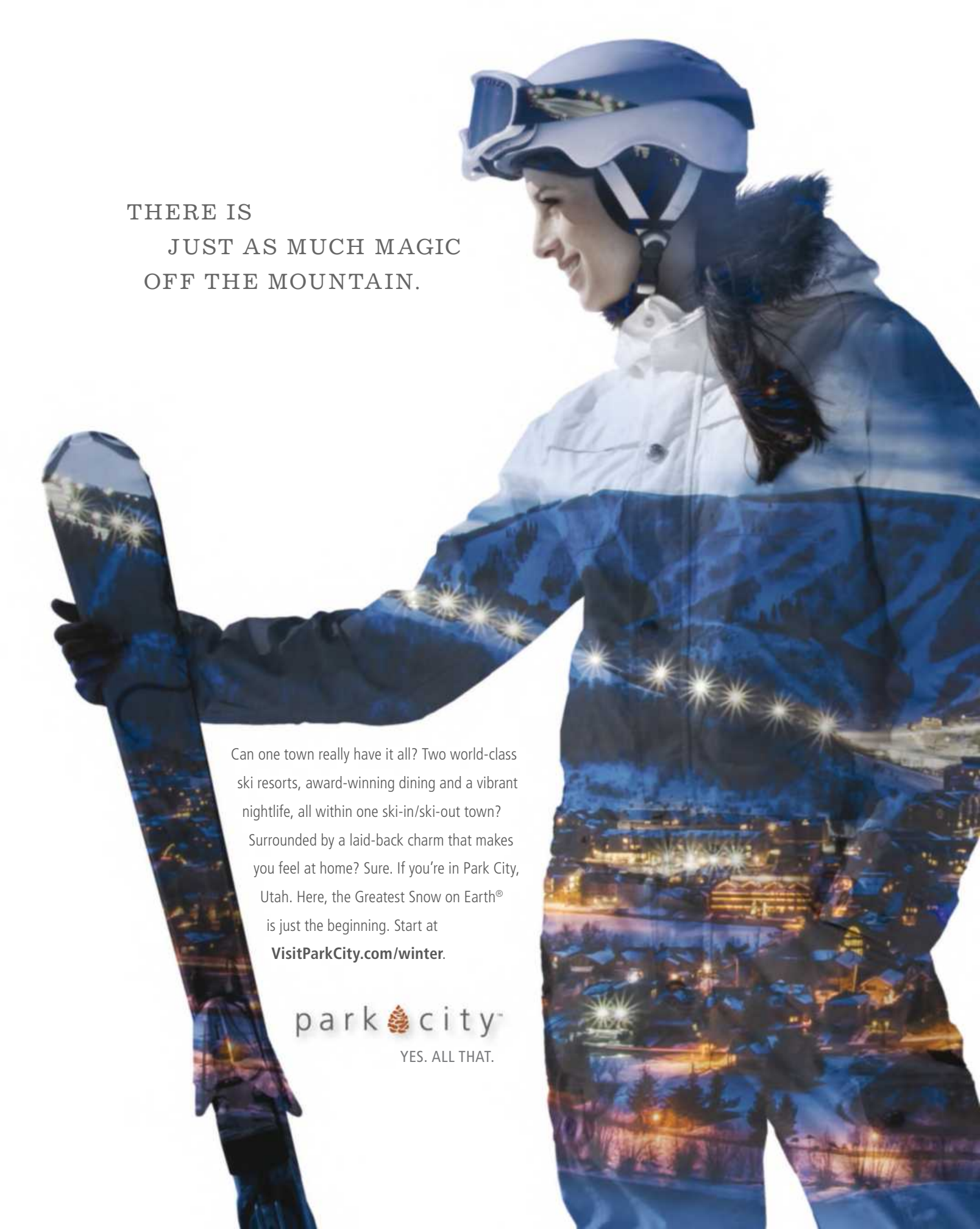
NO PLACE LIKE HOME

You know, you're not the only member of the family who'd like to follow the sun in a cute little travel trailer. Get Max his own canine-size take on the classic Airstream, Shasta, or Nomad, handmade to order by Straight Line Designs in British Columbia. Okay, it's really a doghouse and not exactly roadworthy, but a dog can dream, can't he? P.S. Your cat would love one too. *From $465; straightlinedesigns.com/new/pet-trailers.*

BEST GIFT FOR PETS



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: PEREGRINE CHURCH, JEFFERY CROSS; RENDERING BY BRUCE MUNRO STUDIO


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BEST EXHIBIT

WORTH A THOUSAND NOTES?

No, we'd never claim that a watercolor or a lithograph could replace a song or a symphony. But as the San Diego Museum of Art demonstrates in its ambitious new exhibition, *The Art of Music*, painters, videographers, and sculptors can surely be inspired by music, whether it's Apollo playing his lyre, Beethoven's Fifth, or the psychedelic sounds of the '60s. Just look at the poster Victor Moscoso did for the Avalon Ballroom in 1967 ... you can almost feel minds being blown. *$12; through Feb 7; sdmart.org.*



BEST GIFT FOR WEEKDAYS

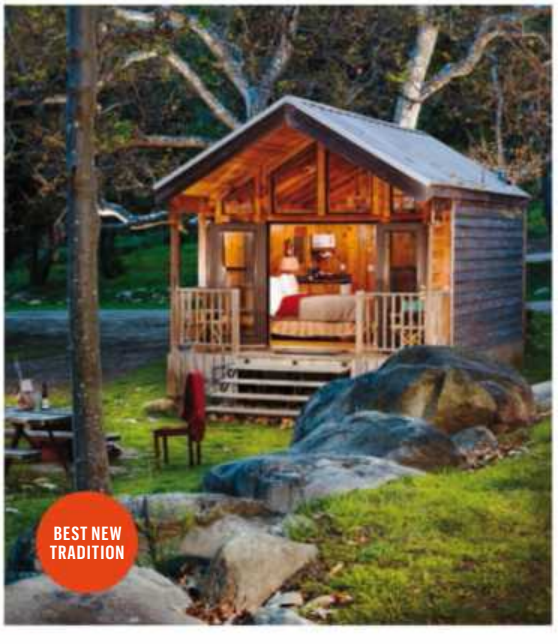
Heritage gear

The Wilderness Rucksack may not be cutting-edge technical gear, and, sure, when you summit your next fourteener, you'll probably carry your carabiners in something all nylon and neon. But for reminding you—as you navigate concrete canyons—of the weekend's adventures awaiting, nothing beats this stylish, outdoorsy-looking bag, made by hand out of waxed twill canvas and leather in Tanner Goods' Portland workshops. *From $425; tannergoods.com.*

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
Find more gift ideas throughout this issue and at *sunset.com/holidaygifts*.

DECK THE TENTS

News flash: You don't *have* to spend the holidays cooped up at home—you could be camping. Why not celebrate Christmas or New Year's in one of nine safari tents pitched at Napa's Pope Valley Winery? TerraVelo Tours will do all the work, of course: cooking your meals; making the beds (yes, beds); and organizing wine tours and truffle hunts. Or, if waves are your thing, head to El Capitan Canyon resort west of Santa Barbara. Here, your lodging options range from safari tents to yurts to cedar-sided cabins (at right), and your days can be spent surfing, hiking, or riding the sand on a beach cruiser. Don't worry—Santa will still be able to find you, even if there's no chimney. *TerraVelo: $2,250/person/5 nights; terravelotours.com. El Capitan: From $145/night; elcapitancanyon.com.*



BEST NEW TRADITION

BOTTOM: ERIC HERNANDEZ/LOOK PHOTOGRAPHY/EL CAPITAN CANYON

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Travel



DINING GUIDE

SEASON'S EATINGS

These nine holiday-ready restaurants guarantee a no-fuss Noel.

Shine on
HOTEL DEL CORONADO SPARKLES WITH 100,000 TWINKLE LIGHTS
p. 20

Photographs by LISA CORSON

It's the bite before Christmas, and all through the house ... dirty dishes are piled in the sink, the ham still has an hour left in the oven, and your in-laws are arriving. Sound familiar? This year, why not gift yourself with some relaxation and dine out for the holidays? We found nine festive restaurants across the West that go all out for the season, with roasted goose and fresh figgy pie, Italian wines and espresso ice cream—all served with a healthy side of cheer. Happy dining!





Hotel del Coronado
Coronado, CA

It's not unusual to see three generations of one family dining together during the holidays. So what's different about it when it happens at the Hotel del Coronado? "Many times, people who came as kids bring their own kids," says Christopher Reid, manager of the hotel's 1500 Ocean eatery, just across the bay from San Diego. "There are people who've been coming to us at Christmas for 20 years."

The holiday tradition at The Del goes back much further than that; the oceanside resort debuted the first electrically lit outdoor Christmas tree in 1904 and to this day uses thousands of lights to decorate the iconic tower and the famous lobby tree.

But it's not stuck in the past. The four-course Christmas Eve and Christmas Day menus at 1500 Ocean include fresh takes on holiday favorites, like duck-liver mousse and cranberry gelée, braised beef short ribs, and chocolate crème brûlée. Diners can sit indoors or on a covered patio, where they can watch people starting new traditions at the hotel's beachfront seasonal ice-skating rink. "At least once a week during the holiday season, someone proposes there," Reid says. *$$$$; 1500 Orange Ave.; hoteldel.com. –Robin Jones*

Hotel Sorrento
Seattle

Holiday tea is a longstanding tradition at Hotel Sorrento, a Seattle icon perched commandingly over downtown since 1909. The light afternoon meal is served in the hotel's Fireside Room, where live jazz is performed most nights except the first Wednesday of the month, when a young crowd gathers for the wildly popular Silent Reading Party. (Picture hushed patrons seated on plush banquettes reading *Moby Dick,* fueled by happy-hour Manhattans from 6 to 8 p.m.) "Our traditional tea service often continues into happy hour during the holidays. It's a festive time," says general manager Angie Mykel.

In the hotel's mahogany-paneled Dunbar Room, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day dinner guests are greeted by burnished Old World comfort and a plated four-course meal. Among the options: butternut-squash bisque, prime rib, Northwest cioppino, seared duck, and vegetable gratin. *$69, $19 ages 12 and under; 900 Madison St.; hotelsorrento.com. –Kim Brown Seely*

Hopscotch
Oakland

Christmas comes early to Hopscotch, a lively diner-inspired bistro in Oakland's Uptown district. A full six weeks before December 25, Hopscotch begins dishing out a new holiday-inspired specialty meal each week. Expect family-style servings of duck with roasted acorn squash or maybe Dungeness crab with homemade soba noodles. The favorite last season was the coveted "Goose Four Ways" dish: juicy smoked goose, goose breast pastrami, crisp goose legs, and goose confit, served with sides of persimmon chutney and fried sunchokes.

"Goose is so tied into Christmas, but I couldn't remember ever actually eating it," says co-owner and executive chef Kyle Itani. "So I did a test run with friends and decided to feature it on the menu"—a tradition he's continuing this year. We suggest pairing it with the "Elf on the Shelf" cocktail: Armagnac, rye, sweet vermouth, génépy, and mint. Homey accessories like wreaths in the window and mason-jar candleholders make it easy to forget you're in an urban diner. *$$; 1915 San Pablo Ave.; hopscotchoakland.com. –Jenna Scatena*

The Compound Restaurant
Santa Fe

If there ever were a perfect chef for Christmas, it would be one who was born on Christmas Day. Such is the case with Mark Kiffin of Santa Fe's beloved Compound. During the holidays, the James Beard Award–winning chef transforms the restaurant into a storybook home decked out with golden pinecones, pine-tree sprigs, reindeer statuettes, and white icicle lights illuminating the snow outside. Many locals have made coming to the historic adobe estate a holiday family tradition.

Hearty dishes include the Compound Classic: buttermilk roast chicken with creamed spinach and foie gras pan gravy. But that shouldn't upstage the lighter fare, such as tuna tartare with homemade preserved lemon, or the crabmeat salad tossed with sweet peppers. *$$$$; 653 Canyon Rd.; compoundrestaurant.com. –J.S.*

Meadowood
St. Helena, CA

Over the past seven years, the annual "Twelve Days of Christmas" dinner has made The Restaurant at Meadowood almost as famous as its namesake hotel. For a dozen days in December, the three-Michelin-star eatery hosts





Hotel del Coronado

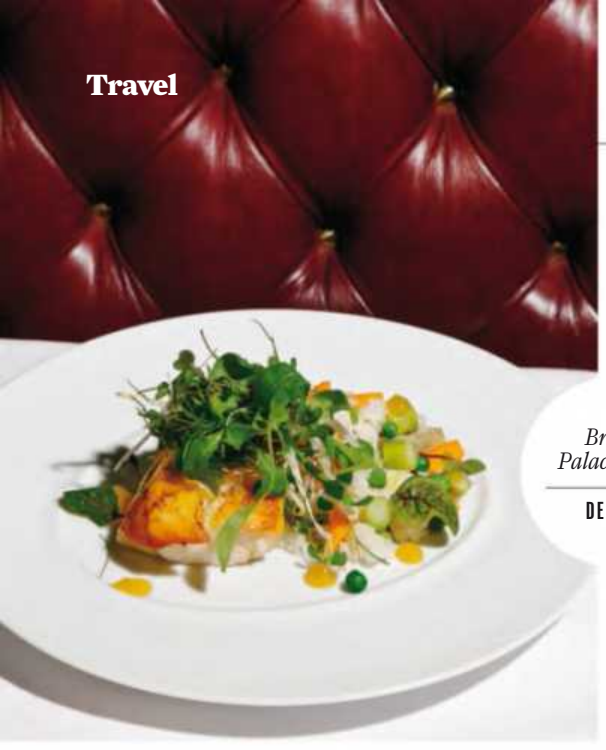
CORONADO, CA





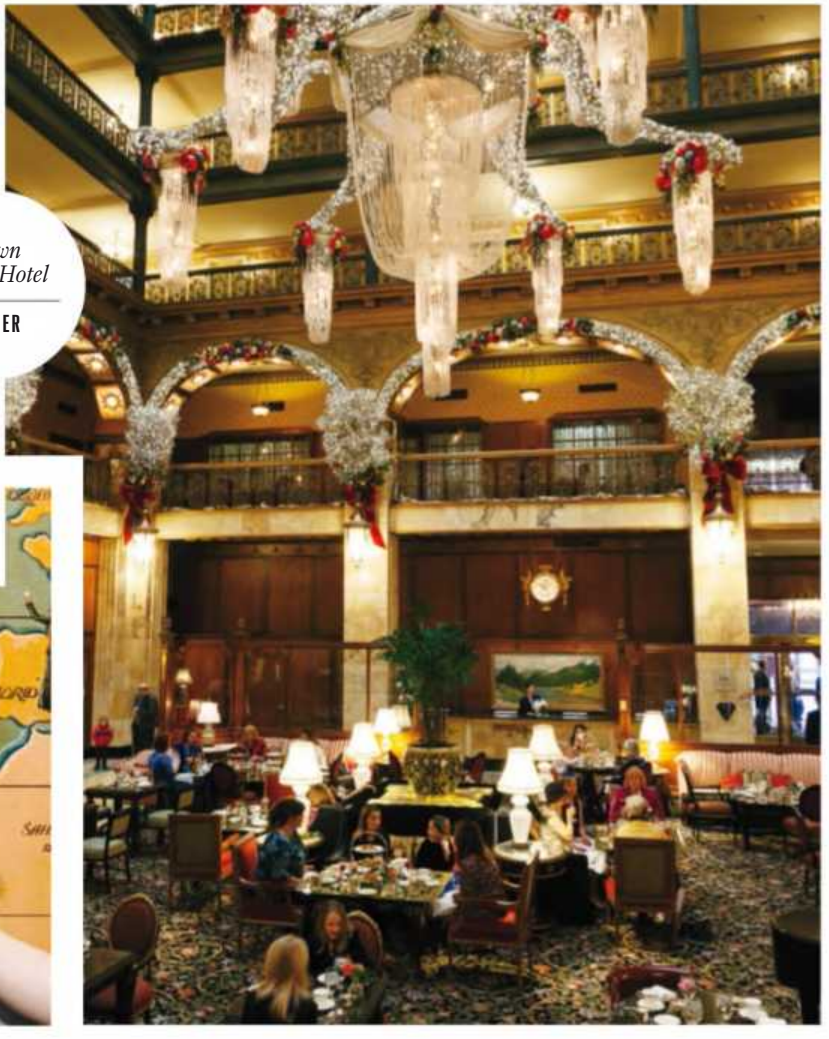


Clockwise from top left: Palms and ice at the hotel's Skating by the Sea rink; a seasonal salad and cheese plate; brunch at the hotel's Crown Room, which overlooks the front lawn; Victorian Tea is a longtime Del holiday tradition; sweet and savory treats are served at the Tea.



Brown Palace Hotel

DENVER





Clockwise from top left: Artfully plated entrées at the Palace Arms; the hotel lobby; maps and maritime artifacts decorate the Ship Tavern.

rising chefs from around the world who create special holiday dinner menus served with Napa Valley wine pairings. Chefs from Denmark, Belgium, France, and Norway have lit up the minimalist restaurant with dishes inspired by Napa and their respective countries. Last year, for instance, beets arrived with red seaweed, plums, almonds, and black lime from Copenhagen.

The understated holiday decor begins right at the arrival gate, which is bordered by trees decked out in white lights. Plants native to the property—branches, grapevines, berries—are crafted into wreaths or garlands, and an elegant Christmas tree dominates the restaurant's interior. *$$$$; 900 Meadowood Lane; therestaurantatmeadowood.com. —J.S.*

Brown Palace Hotel

Denver

One 12-foot evergreen; scores of garlands and wreaths; at least 130 poinsettias; and one 25-foot-wide, 3,500-pound chandelier. That's what it takes to transform the Brown Palace Hotel into holiday central. The effect: magical.

We love Christmas dinner at the hotel's unfussy Ship Tavern, which dates to 1934 and inhabits the "prow" of the famously triangular hotel. Chef Michael Rodriguez's holiday menu *($55 prix fixe; Dec 24–25)* features comforting classics—juicy prime rib, tender sea bass—while Charles Smith's playful drinks menu spotlights local flavors—Breckenridge-made bitters, say, or honey harvested from the Brown Palace roof. Beers on tap include the seasonally changing Brown Palace cask craft ale, made down the street at the Wynkoop Brewing Company.

Given the informal atmosphere, you'll feel equally comfortable in a little black dress or a Peyton Manning jersey. In the corner, hotel pianist John Kite plays seasonal favorites ("Let It Snow"), and, if you're lucky, he could be joined by a local musical theater actor, or even by Billy Joel, who once duetted in the lobby. According to veteran bartender Charles Smith, who's worked here for 14 years, "People come back again and again, year after year, and there's very little turnover in the staff… it feels like a family." *$$$$; 321 17th St.; brownpalace.com. —Megan McCrea*

A16

San Francisco

Throughout the year, this Marina neighborhood stalwart stakes its claim on delicacies from Italy's Campania region. Lucky for diners, its plan remains the same during the holidays.

Every year on Christmas Eve, A16 serves the Italian region's special Feast of Seven Fishes, a seven-course marathon of seafood dressed up with local California ingredients. Delicate octopus is stewed with potato, green olives, and *ceci neri* (black chickpeas); tuna conserva joins Calabrian chile and dandelion greens resting on a pillow of fava-bean purée; squid-ink tonnarelli is mixed with Meyer lemon and Mendocino sea urchin. Dishes as simple as pizza—crisped in an

MORGAN LEVY (3)

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The Original Dinerant

PORTLAND



Clockwise from top left: A boozy peppermint mocha, spiked with New Deal Mud Puddle vodka; The Original has a combination classic-diner and rock 'n' roll vibe; a praline-apricot entremets.

oven so hot it opens and cooks the clams set on top of it—serve as a centerpiece to the conversation. Don't overlook the Italian wine-pairing options, which include a choice of white, red, or natural. *$$$$; 2355 Chestnut St.; a16sf.com. –J.S.*

The Original Dinerant
Portland

Save room for dessert: Handmade pies are baked fresh most days at The Original Dinerant. That includes apple pies filled with Oregon and Washington apples and single-serving "figgy" pies topped with fresh figs.

With its spacious booths, updated Danish-modern decor, and candlelit bar, the Original has an upscale 1960s-diner-meets-supper-club vibe—just the place to kick off Christmas Eve or Christmas dinner with an oak barrel–aged Manhattan served straight up. "We'll be turning your mom's usual Christmas staples into diner destination dishes," says new chef AJ Voytko. On Christmas Day, when the diner gets decked out in garlands and oversize Christmas ornaments, that means a $38 prix fixe menu, including either horseradish-crusted prime rib, grilled steelhead, or a vegetarian asparagus lasagna; arugula salad topped by candied hazelnuts, goat cheese, and vanilla croutons; and for dessert, brioche crème brûlée bread pudding. *$$; 300 S.W. Sixth Ave.; originaldinerant.com. –K.B.S.*

Balboa Bay Resort
Newport Beach, CA

Longtime visitors to the Balboa Bay Resort got a bit of a shock when they walked into the hotel lobby during the holidays last year: A complete remodel had turned the clubby space into a stylish and modern spot. "Lots of people who had been coming for years were looking around, asking us, 'What used to be there? And what used to be over here?' " says JC Converse, manager of the Balboa's upscale Waterline Newport Beach restaurant when it reopened. "It's no longer stuffy, old, and traditional here. There's a new vibe."

Once the initial surprise wore off, even the old-timers warmed up to the changes, Converse says, and the eclectic new holiday menu certainly helped the cause. Main courses included seared duck breast with crisp ravioli of confit duck and balsamic roasted fig; desserts like sticky toffee pudding with citrus confit and espresso ice cream ended meals with a wink to tradition. And despite the transformation, one of the restaurant's main draws remains the same: the unparalleled view of Newport Bay, where yachts and mansions lavishly decorated for the annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade put on a dazzling light show after dark. *$$$; 1221 West Coast Hwy.; balboabayresort.com. –R.J.*

DIGITAL BONUS Ice skating by the ocean, a Santa dash, and more holiday traditions in the West: *sunset.com/holiday traditions.*

JOHN CLARK (3)

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DISCOVER





1. The skating rink at Squaw's High Camp. **2.** Burger and fries at the PlumpJack Cafe. **3.** Uncorked's vintage après-ski scene. **4.** Future powder hounds carb up on goodies from Wildflour Baking Company. **5.** Squaw Valley's Aerial Tram.







A PERFECT DAY IN

OLYMPIC VALLEY, CA

A North Lake Tahoe resort community gets a lift with wine bars, a luxe spa, and enough ski runs to keep you busy all winter long. *By Christopher Hall*

Double down on your skiing

When sleepy little **Squaw Valley** hosted the 1960 Winter Olympics here, ski-jump competitors glided to a halt just short of the parking lot, a frozen meadow. The resort has grown to include 3,600 skiable acres, with more than 170 trails, 4 terrain parks, and the bustling Village at Squaw Valley, where stone paths wind past outdoor firepits, shops, and restaurants. The trails aren't all black diamonds, either—70 percent are beginner or intermediate. More mountain for your dollar? In 2011, Squaw merged with neighboring **Alpine Meadows** and its 2,400 skiable acres. Lift tickets get you access to both resorts, giving skiers and boarders more room to follow the sun when the corn snow could use a little warming. *1960 Squaw Valley Rd.; squawalpine.com.*

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Photographs by DAVID FENTON


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Squaw Creek as the quiet back door to the downhill bustle of Squaw Valley, just five minutes away. It's also home to the only nordic center in the Olympic Valley, with 10 miles of groomed ski and snowshoe trails, plus an outdoor ice rink and rides on dogsleds and horse-drawn sleighs. If you're feeling bushed at the end of an active day, the 90-minute High-Altitude Massage at North Lake Tahoe's largest spa may be just the ticket. *Rooms from $329, massage $155, ski pass $18, ice skating $12; squawcreek.com.*

City-slicker dining

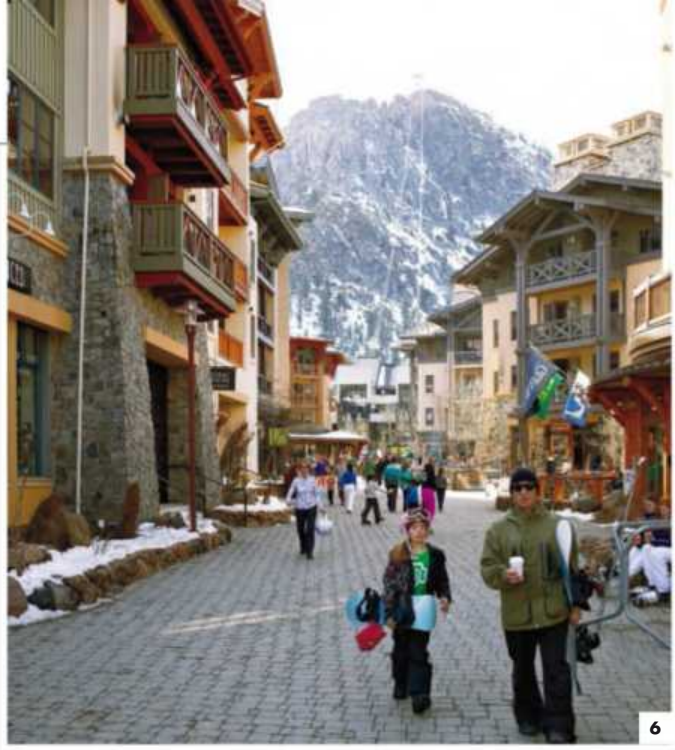
The après-ski crowd in **PlumpJack Cafe** looks straight out of an REI photo shoot, but the decor—custom metal sconces, cushy upholstered banquettes—exudes a swanky urban vibe. So does the menu, which may include pork saltimbocca or crispy marinated tofu with mung-bean sprouts, and a wine list full of surprises. Nearby, new bottle shop **Uncorked** morphs into a cozy wine bar at night, serving small-lot vintages from around the globe; the dough for the chewy-crusted pies at neighboring **Fireside Pizza Company** arrives fresh daily from the Truckee Sourdough Company. In one of Squaw's original 1960 buildings, **Wildflour Baking Company** has been selling its warm chocolate-chip cookies and other treats to a generation of carb-hungry skiers, including longtime regulars like Olympians Julia Mancuso and Jonny Moseley. *PlumpJack: $$$; 1920 Squaw Valley Rd.; plumpjackcafe.com. Uncorked: Village at Squaw Valley; uncorkedsquaw.com. Fireside: $$; 1985 Squaw Valley Rd.; firesidepizza.com. Wildflour: Olympic House; wildfloursquaw.com.*

Bean-to-bath indulgence

Life really has been a bowl of cherries for Dorinda Vance. "I started making chocolate-covered cherries when I was 12," says the owner of **Dorinda's Chocolates**, a pristine boutique filled with hand-dipped caramels, espresso truffles, those cherries, and other sweets. A block away, **Lather & Fizz Bath Boutique** explodes with colorful soaps, lotions, and softball-size bath bombs made in nearby Tahoe City. They also carry custom BedHead Pajamas, the printed cotton pj's favored by Oprah. *Dorinda's: dorindaschocolates.com. Lather & Fizz: latherandfizz.com.*

Reach Olympian heights

The glass-walled cabins of Squaw Valley's **Aerial Tram** offer a bird's-eye view of snowy peaks and cobalt Lake Tahoe while climbing 2,000 vertical feet in eight minutes. Up top, at High Camp, check out the small museum of 1960 Winter Olympics artifacts, which include some of the last wooden skis ever used in Olympic downhill competition. "The French were the only team with metal-composite skis," says local historian David C. Antonucci, "and they took gold and bronze in the men's event." *Tram $39, museum free; squawalpine.com.*


6


7


8


9

6. The Village at Squaw Valley. **7.** Tahoe's tastiest pies are at Fireside Pizza Company. **8.** Nordic skiing at Resort at Squaw Creek. **9.** Lather & Fizz Bath Boutique.

THE LOCAL LOWDOWN

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MAP: MARGARET SLOAN

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THE LONGEST DAY

It's one of the classic West Coast brags: You can surf and ski here in the same day. But has anyone actually tried it? We convinced new transplant *Mickey Rapkin* to take the surf & turf challenge.

I MOVED TO LOS ANGELES about a year ago, trading a cramped Manhattan dump for a house with a backyard, a dishwasher, and an apricot tree. Sure, I watched a squirrel eat every last apricot from my bedroom window, but at least I *had* a bedroom window. Pick your battles. Since I got here, I tried playing the part: I leased a Prius and started shopping at a farmers' market, but in all other ways, I was still living like a dyed-in-the-wool-suit East Coaster. I'm pretty sure I was the only person in L.A. having Indian food delivered twice a week. I still ate dinner on my bed, in front of the TV. I had to remind myself I had a dining room. After six months here, I looked in the mirror and wondered: Was I pale or just anemic? I was doing something wrong.

California living is all about the outdoors, and I started to hear a single mantra repeated again and again: "Where else can you surf and ski in the same day!" It's a nice idea, I thought, but come on, does anyone actually *do* this thing? Nobody in L.A. even walks! Yet somewhere nearby, people were apparently in the water before breakfast and on the slopes before lunch? I'm a writer, and I can tell you there are days I don't even shower, let alone tackle two athletic disciplines.

Somehow this idea took root. It was time to push myself outside my front door and way past my comfort zone. On a whim, I booked a morning surf lesson, my first ever, at the iconic Malibu Surf Shack followed by an afternoon ski run 130 miles east at Bear Mountain. It would be a very California adventure, I imagined. And it was: Beginning with an earthquake registering 4.4 on the Richter scale, shaking my house and the apricot tree, like a toddler gripping an Etch A Sketch. It was 6:25 a.m. I wiped the sleep from my eyes, threw some swim trunks in a canvas tote, and tried not to take Mother Nature's alarm clock as a sign of impending doom.

The Malibu Surf Shack is a second-story shop overlooking Pacific Coast Highway and some of California's most coveted real estate. I've never coveted a neighbor's property more biblically in my life, I thought, taking in the view. Here's where they're hiding the sun! Inside the Shack, a 20-something clerk with He-Man arms and zero worries fetches me a wetsuit from the back of the store.

"Put it on like a onesie," he explains. "Like a baby." This advice proves emasculating if not entirely on point.

My surf instructor, Ryan Krouse, leads me toward the beach, and he's everything I am not: tan, 19 years old, looks great in a wetsuit. We carry our boards over our heads, walking past Malibu's historic First Point, where so much awesome surf photography happened in the '60s. He tells me to keep moving. Where to? "Third Point," he says, pointing in the distance. "Aka Kiddie Bowls."

Before we get in the water, Krouse tutors me on the anatomy of the surfboard, pointing out the nose, tail, rails, and the stringer—the wooden core at the center of the board. I lay down in the sand and practice paddling. If I'm too far forward, he says, I'll nose dive. Perch too

JEFFERY CROSS; DIORAMA: LISA SWERLING





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far back and I won't be able to catch a wave. *Pssh*, I think. This starter surfboard, a Black Tip, is 10 feet long and nearly as wide. It's basically the size of a door. Surely I can stand on a door.

I paddle as hard as I can, face first, and I'm too embarrassed to admit my arms are already exhausted. Krouse zips far ahead like Aquaman, shouting back to me: "Paddle out!" We wait for a wave. We wait some more. "They shouldn't call it *surfing*," he says. "They should call it *waiting*." We make small talk. He tells me he learned to surf when he was 7 years old, and that he once saved the actor Will Ferrell, who got a bit too far from shore in a kayak. I try to imagine this when finally a wave approaches.

"Push up!" he shouts. "Push up!" But I react too late, attempt to stand up, and fall hard in the water. I try paddling back out to him, but the next wave pushes me under water and back toward the shore. This happens more times than I'd like to admit. "That's what's called being recycled," he says, with a laugh. I spit out salt water and wonder what I did to offend a tiki god.

"It's okay," Krouse says, sensing that I need the encouragement. "You're using muscles you wouldn't normally use. I've had bodybuilders come out and have problems. It's not just you." He reminds me to "meet force with force," but I can't remember what that means.

Wave. *Fall.* Wave. *Crash.* I sit up on my "door" and rest. I am exhausted. I ask what time it is. We have been in the water for exactly 17 minutes. When I vomit in my mouth—apparently you can get seasick from sitting on a board—I decide to call it quits. I feel more Jewish in this moment than I did at my own bar mitzvah. But today I'm man enough to know my own limitations. Back at the Surf Shack, I ask for a plastic bag for my wet shorts. "There are no plastic bags in Malibu," he reminds me. I throw the trunks in my trunk and wonder what else I forgot to bring.

IT'S ONLY 10:15 A.M. but I'm already starving. I drive past Malibu's historic Reel Inn and consider a fish taco. It's early for mahimahi. Then again, I have survived an earthquake today. And surfed. (Sort of.) Unfortunately, the Reel Inn doesn't open until 11 a.m. I consider waiting but think better of it. Bear Mountain closes around 4. Surfing and skiing in one day is possible, but nobody ever said it was leisurely. I head for the mountains blasting KCRW's Morning Becomes Eclectic, then call friends in New York to discuss their never-ending winter. I'm taking Interstate 10 east to State 330 north, I tell them, proudly feeling like a character on that *Saturday Night Live* sketch "The Californians." Maybe I do belong here.

Traversing the San Bernardino Mountains—a winding, 30-mile scenic pass to Bear Mountain—is a pleasure on any day. But especially today, with the taste of salt water still in my mouth, reminding me of a childhood summer. The elevation changes, the desert dust and cactus giving way to patches of snow on the ground. For the first time today, I wonder if this surf-and-turf challenge might be about something more than endurance. It's starting to feel like an exploration, a tour through a topography map come stunningly to life. I roll down the windows and congratulate myself on choosing an excellent time to relocate.

I arrive at Bear Mountain at 1:30 p.m. sharp and rent a pair of 58-inch Rossignol Pursuit skis. As with a surfboard, the shorter the skis, the easier it is to maneuver. At least here I won't have a problem standing up. I do, however, have a problem dressing myself. The attendant shoots me a confused look and asks, "Will you be skiing in jeans?"

A list of things I forgot to bring with me: sunglasses, sunscreen, snow pants, and gloves. My genial instructor, 62-year-old Stephen Weber, laughs at me, fishing a pair of child-size gloves out of the lost and found. Kiddie gloves?

It's been three years since I was last on skis, so I start on a beginner trail. Weber helps correct my posture and keeps my arms pointing down the mountain. He coaches me on getting into the "athletic pose" and even compliments my form. Redemption! I consider asking him to call the Surf Shack to let them know how athletic I truly am.

It's practically balmy up here. I open my jacket and take in the glorious sunshine, thanking the heat for melting the snow just enough to slow me down in the steeper turns. The slushier-than-normal snow gives me confidence to attempt a Black Slope run. We ride chairlift 9 up across to chair 4 and down Exhibition.

"Smile for the webcam," Weber says, pointing to Channel 7's live stream. We're two hours from L.A., but everyone still wants to be on TV. It's nearly 4 and I'm already thinking about the hot après-ski haunts. He suggests Captain's Anchorage, an allegedly haunted tavern in town, once owned by the actor Andy Devine, famous for playing a cowboy on TV.

"It's a three-hour drive from Bear Mountain to Las Vegas," he says. Maybe next time I'll surf, ski, and *gamble* in one day.

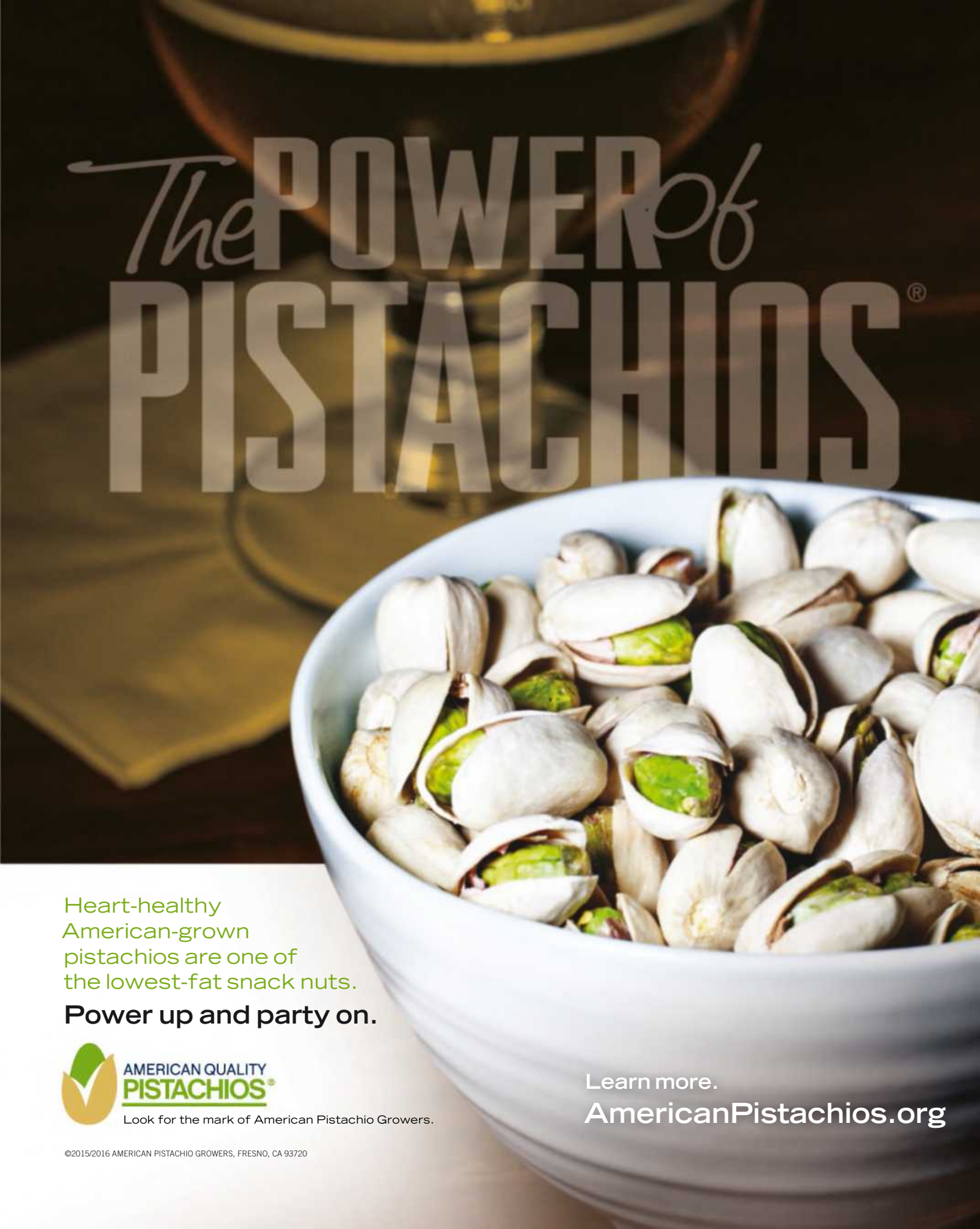
Exhausted but invigorated, I decide to return my skis and drive home, not to beat traffic but to prove a point. Because I've learned something I hadn't expected on this adventure but which now seems obvious. After showering, I race to meet friends for dinner. I come armed with a bottle of wine, but I've got something more important to share: serious bragging rights. Oh, you got an iced coffee today? I went surfing and skiing—and still made it home for supper. Bragging rights. Come to think of it, that's what California living is really all about.

YOUR TICKET TO THE GREAT CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE

You want to surf, you want to ski, you want to brag. We get it. Here's where to go.

SURF There's no better spot for catching your first head of foam than at Malibu's **Surfrider Beach**, famous for its steady supply of beginner-friendly swells. The sunblock-splotched instructors at **Malibu Surf Shack** start you surfing on the sand before easing you into the ocean. *$125/1½-hr. lesson, including board and wetsuit; malibusurfshack.com.*

SKI There are ski resorts closer to the SoCal coast, but none of them give you as much downhill for your dollar as **Bear Mountain**, an 800-acre skier-snowboarder wonderland in the San Bernardino Mountains, 2 hours from downtown L.A.: 37 trails, 12 lifts, four 8,000-foot peaks, 17 rideable miles. And they promise to have you home by dinner. *Lift tickets from $69, private lessons from $109 for 1 hr.; bearmountain.com.*


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SEASONAL STYLE

GARDEN AGLOW

Five brilliant ways to amp up your yard or porch for the holidays.
By Johanna Silver



Starlit globes

Create outdoor chandeliers by wrapping lights around old wine-barrel hoops, then suspending them from the branches of a large tree. Even easier: Rest one globe each atop two large planters flanking the front door. *Hoops: From $49/3-hoop orb; etsy.com/shop/PurpleThumbNotions. Battery-powered LED copper-wire lights: $10 each (use 2/globe); amazon.com.*

Photographs by THOMAS J. STORY | *Styling by* EMMA STAR JENSEN



Fire without the flame

Keep a firepit glowing all season with copper-wire lights loosely draped over a pile of wooden logs. Use a battery-powered strand or conceal the extension cord around a less-traveled side of the firepit. (And, of course, remove the decoration when it's time to start a real fire!) *Cast-iron fire bowl: $350; dwr.com. Stargazer lights: $32/15 ft.; shopterrain.com.*



Twinkling tumbleweeds

Copper-wire lighting can turn a mild nuisance—tumbleweeds—into something magical. Place them along a garden pathway, hiding extension cords beneath nearby plants or fencing. If tumbleweeds (Russian thistles) aren't piling up outside your door, you can buy them online. *Tumbleweeds: From $20/12 in. wide; curiouscountrycreations.com. Stargazer lights: $32/15 ft.; shopterrain.com.*



Tree of light

Show off the delicately twisted branches of a compact young tree such as 'Twisty Baby' black locust, corkscrew willow, or Harry Lauder's walking stick (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') by wrapping it in lights. To cover this 4-foot-tall walking stick, we used eight 15-foot strands (for a more affordable approach, wrap just a few branches). *Stargazer lights: $32/15 ft.; shopterrain.com.*

DIGITAL BONUS Brighten your landscape with festive lights: *sunset.com/holidaylights*.

Electric wreath

Illuminate your garden with a globe-light wreath. To give some of the bulbs a frosty look, as pictured, apply frosted-glass spray before you begin. Then tightly group a strand of lights to cover a section of a wire wreath frame, attaching the strands with zip ties on the back side. Add as many strands as you need to cover the wreath form; we used three strands of 25-count lights to cover a 12-inch frame. Plug your wreath into an extension cord. *Lights: $12 strand; target.com. Ashland wire wreath frame: $3; michaels.com. Frosted-glass spray: $5; onlinefabricstore.net.*



Be a PRESENT-DAY hero

By JOHANNA SILVER and JOANNA LINBERG Photograph by JEFFERY CROSS Styling by EMMA STAR JENSEN



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From our garden and home editors to you: the handpicked gifts most likely to delight the plant whisperer and design lover on your list

1 *Digging in* Some things never change, like our absolute allegiance to Atlas Nitrile Garden Gloves. Perfect as stocking-stuffers, they'll keep beloved gardeners' hands protected while still allowing the dexterity gardeners need to get the dirty work done. *From $14/4-pack; amazon.com.*

2 *Footloose* Embrace El Niño with dry feet. Dafna by Naot Lian ankle-cut rain boots slip on and off easily. They're cute enough to wear between showers too. *$115; onlineshoes.com.*

3 *Peace offering* Extend an olive branch this holiday season with a gift that will grow for decades to come. Each tree comes wrapped in a jute bag and tied with a silk ribbon. *$45; boxhilldesign.com.*

4 *Twisty tannenbaum* Spread, spin, or straighten this tree's basswood branches into a shape that suits your style. At only 17 inches high, this is just the thing for tight quarters. *$45; tenover6.com.*

5 *Merry marker* Help a friend keep her sowings straight with this plant marker, an iconic San Francisco–made Heath tile on a steel stake that patinates over time. These reusable markers brighten any bed. *$20 each; lesliecbennett.com/studio.*

6 *Ring in the new year* Hand-painted with constellations, these wheel-thrown ceramic bells with hemp hangers and reclaimed wood clappers are perfect gifts for the stargazers in your life. The bells vary in size (the one on the left measures 5½ inches across) and are sturdy enough to hang outdoors. *From $235; pistils nursery.com.*

7 *For the birds* Inspired by California Craftsman bungalows, this birdhouse kit, designed in L.A., provides a fun wintertime project that helps support local wildlife—a win-win for the holidays. *$40; scoutregalia.com.*

8 *Playing favorites* When it comes to decorating, don't leave out your desk. These 5-inch hardwood gnomes—each made of three stackable pieces—are charming additions. *$44/set of 3; fruitsuperdesign.com.*

9 *Healing vibes* Kick a winter cold by reading up on plant-based medicines in the new book *The Herbal Apothecary: 100 Medicinal Herbs and How to Use Them* (Timber Press, 2015; $25). Portland-based author JJ Pursell offers instructions for making your own teas, salves, and more. *timberpress.com.*

10 *More minimalism* For anyone who's vowed to downsize and divest, this is the right guidebook. The gorgeous homes featured in *The Kinfolk Home* (Artisan, 2015; $35) show how creative paring down can be. *thekinfolkhome.com.*

11 *Serve and protect* When your host looks around frantically for coasters, it's time to pull out this present. The cheery felt (and you) will save the day. *$26/set of 4; cotton andflax.com.*

12 *Golden glow* For upgrading candles, of course, but you can just as easily fill this plated glass hurricane with white amaryllis or kumquats for a smart centerpiece. *Also comes in silver, $98; serenaandlily.com.*

13 *Light the way* Los Angeles and San Francisco design-build firm Marmol Radziner's savvy doesn't stop with clean-lined, modern homes. They designed a menorah, handmade from walnut and brass, that would look right at home in one of their places—or in yours. *$140; marmolradzinerjewelry.com.*

14 *Flight of fancy* On the wall or on the table, this set of stoneware plates lets your favorite bird-watcher score some sightings in the off-season. *$39/set of 4; buddfinn.com.*

15 *Succulent bedding* We've seen spineless agaves, but never ones soft enough to cuddle with. Each cotton canvas pillow is hand-printed in Berkeley. *$75; pottedstore.com.*

DIGITAL BONUS New ideas for wrapping gifts: *sunset.com/giftwrap.*

EASY STYLE

Desert beauty

A designer turns a New Mexico pueblo into a little slice of paradise.

By Sarah Latta

SUSAN STELLA first fell in love with the brown and rose-colored badlands of New Mexico when she was a girl gazing out the windows of her family's VW bus during their annual road trips from Illinois to California.

"Santa Fe seemed like the most exotic place in the States, and it still feels that way," says Stella, who moved here full-time after five years of traveling back and forth from Montana to the Southwest.

The interior designer *(susanmstella.com)* bought a two-bedroom 1972 pueblo house in Tesuque, a river-valley village that feels rural though it's minutes from Santa Fe. The home needed stucco repairs and a new roof, so Stella took the opportunity to make some historically minded renovations. "I wanted it to look worn in," she says. "Nothing new or shiny." She used clay plaster and paint on the walls, replaced windowsills with hand-hewn pine, and added traditional banco seating.

At first, Stella decorated with New Mexican and Spanish colonial antiques in a spot-on rendition of Southwestern style. But lately, she's sprinkled in Moroccan pieces from her travels, as well as a few midcentury touches inspired by a trip to Georgia O'Keeffe's home: a Saarinen womb chair and a Noguchi coffee table, among others.

The mix hits Stella's sweet spot. " 'The historical meets the modern' is really exciting," she says. "Here, I feel creative."

Photographs by **THOMAS J. STORY**











Living room

Stella swapped her sofa for a banco, far left, a traditional, built-in style of seating that she fashioned from solid adobe brick, wire, and plaster, then topped with cushions. "When you're dealing with a small space, built-ins help things feel less cluttered," she says. She removed the eyesore wall heater and installed a mini pine sill in the resulting niche, above, to display collected curiosities.

Front door

Heeding local custom, Stella painted the window and front door frames a traditional blue, top left, said to reflect the sky and keep out evil spirits.

Kitchen

"They're warping, but I like them that way," Stella says of her hand-hewn pine counters. Willow-twig cabinet doors match the window screens throughout the house. **Chandelier:** *Chondelierra, artesanos.com.*









Master bedroom

"Since it's a small house, the rooms needed to flow easily into one another," Stella says. To make that happen, she used similar colors and patterns in all the main rooms, including the master bedroom, opposite. Variations of the stripes, for example, are nearly everywhere. Pink clay pigment, applied like plaster to the walls, mirrors the colors of the hills beyond the house. **Accent wall:** *americanclay.com.*

Bathroom

For more character, Stella covered the old white tub face, above right, with blue Talavera tiles to match the shower-wall tile that was there when she bought the house. New pine cabinetry, designed to look old, is finished with Mexican iron hardware from a local shop. **Tile:** *Standard Talavera pattern 99, artesanos.com.*

Patio

At night, the candlelit Moroccan lantern illuminates the wooden Mexican table and cafe chairs, left. Committed to keeping the house as wild as she found it, Stella left the wisteria vine gloriously overgrown, enveloping the patio in leafy splendor. "It's my favorite place to work, write, and entertain."

DIGITAL BONUS
Want a hit of this contemporary Southwest style for your own home? Shop the look: *wayfair.com/southweststyle*.


"The wonderful thing about New Mexico is you come here and feel like you're in a different country."
—SUSAN STELLA

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Your CHECKLIST

PLANT

Shop for bare-root fruit trees now for the best selection. Look for the new apricot-plum cross 'Summer Delight' aprium, which ripens in late July and packs more apricot flavor than a pluot. ***baylaurelnursery.com.***

Choose camellias from the many varieties blooming in nurseries. Our top picks: 'Bob Hope', with deep red semidouble flowers, and 'Debutante', with pale pink peony-shaped blossoms. Plant in well-draining soil that's rich in organic material; water regularly until plants are established.

Plant bare-root artichokes 4 to 6 feet apart in loosened and amended soil, in a spot that gets full sun. Keep the ground moist.

HARVEST

Cut the outer leaves of cool-season greens such as collards, kale, mustard greens, and Swiss chard often to encourage new leaves. Use pruners to cut cabbage and cauliflower heads when they're firm and well formed.

MAINTAIN

Lay 3 inches of bark mulch or pine needles on dirt pathways to keep mud down and prevent tracking it into the house.

Build shallow basins of soil around the drip lines of newly planted trees. Slowly fill each basin with water, saturating the soil. Add a layer of bark mulch to help retain moisture (avoid piling it near the trunk). Or try the new GreenwellWater Saver, a hinged basin of UV-stabilized plastic that you slip into the soil around small trees to encourage deep-root watering without runoff. *$14; jacksonandperkins.com.*



"Kalanchoe makes a dramatic focal point, and it thrives when left alone."

JOHANNA SILVER, SENIOR GARDEN EDITOR

Dial down irrigation systems or turn them off if rain is predicted.

In areas with frequent freezes, mulch strawberry plants with a 4-inch layer of lightweight cover, such as straw or pine needles, to protect the tender crowns.

Spray deciduous fruit trees and roses with dormant oil to smother pests such as insect eggs, mites, and scale. The oil is effective only if it comes in immediate contact with pests—multiple applications offer the best chance of eradication. ***groworganic.com.***

GIVE

Plant a street tree through Friends of the Urban Forest, and one will be grown and cared for in San Francisco. *$50; fuf.net.*



JOHN ELLIS

IDEA WE LOVE

Perfect patina

What's old can look fresh again. That's what Los Angeles–based landscape architect Lisa Gimmy *(lglalandscape.com)* thought when she plucked this rusty container from a junk pile. Now it's filled with a shapely felt plant *(Kalanchoe beharensis)*—whose coppery crinkles accent the vessel's patina—and lime green donkey tail *(Sedum morganianum)*, which dangles over the side. The planting thrives in part shade year-round with little water or maintenance. A grassy *Lomandra* and a courtyard of olive trees border the container and fit in with the Mediterranean theme.

Learn what to plant when with our year-round checklists: *sunset.com/checklists.*

Reported by LAUREN DUNEC HOANG & KIMBERLY GOMES

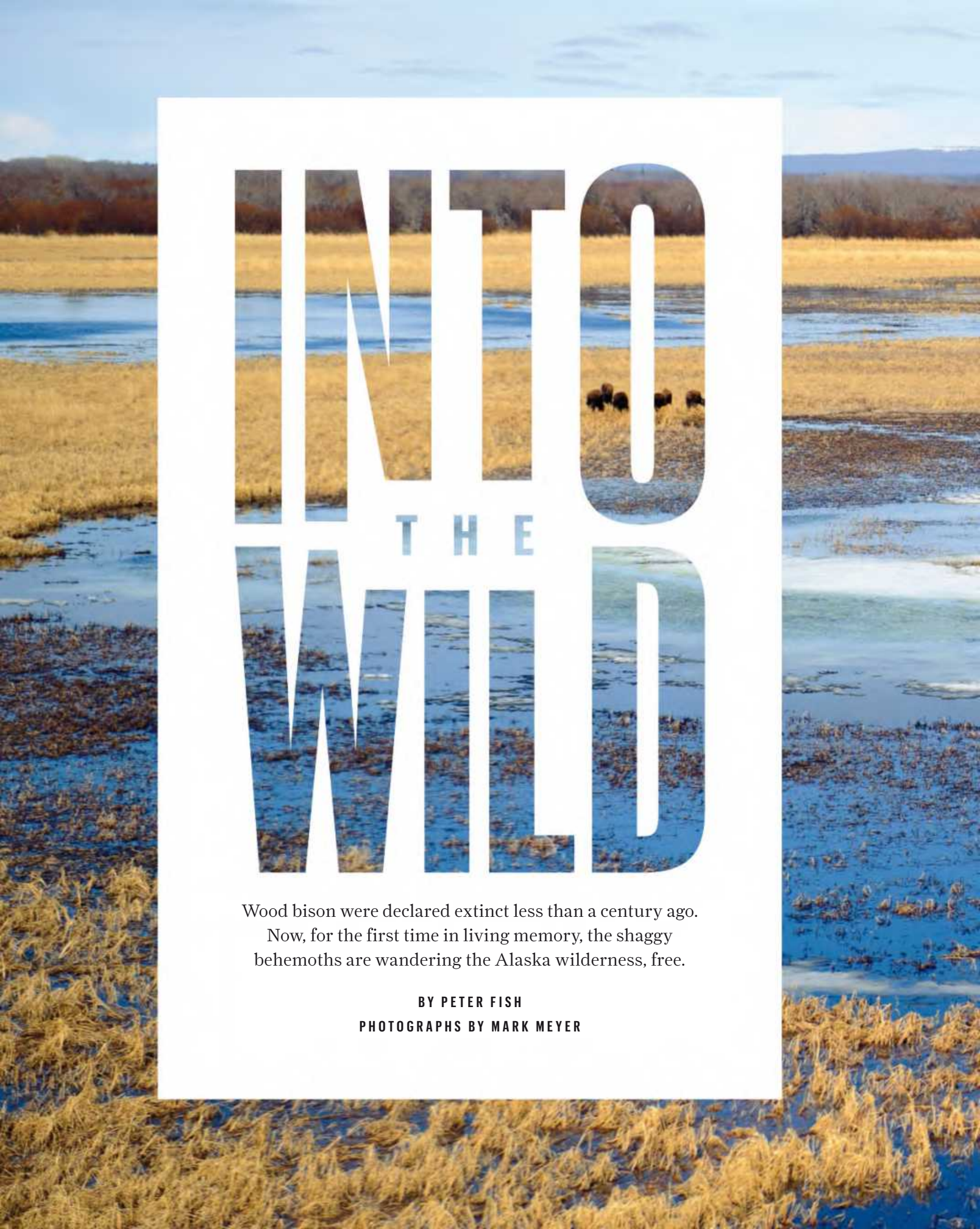


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wayfair.com



INTO THE WILD

Wood bison were declared extinct less than a century ago. Now, for the first time in living memory, the shaggy behemoths are wandering the Alaska wilderness, free.

BY PETER FISH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MEYER



A late winter morning last March. A dawn sky you see only in Alaska,

silvered as the inside of a mussel shell, light brushing the snowy peaks of the Chugach Mountains but not yet warming the boggy pasture where the bison stand. They are large, stoic animals, their wide, bearded faces impassive. Or, you think, ruminative, because they are of course ruminants, a few of them browsing the hay bales that have been stacked in the mud for them. Their thick coats are the brown-black of cocoa beans, of a shag carpet left over from the 1970s. Bison breath steams the cold morning air.

Now, all around them, rises a rush of motorized activity: semitrucks and forklifts, government agency pickups and satellite dish–sprouting vans from Anchorage TV. And people: bison wranglers, biologists, bureaucrats, reporters like me. In a few hours, much of this bison herd—100 animals in all, some of them weighing as much as 2,200 pounds—will embark on one of the most improbable journeys in the history of American conservation. They will be herded through squeeze chutes into steel bison shipping containers and hauled by truck and cargo plane from this wildlife sanctuary south of Anchorage to a new home in the wilds of western Alaska.

"Nothing about this project is small" is the mantra of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff who are running around with walkie-talkies. The press is trying to chase down Tom Seaton, the department biologist and ringmaster to this circus. Seaton enumerates all the things that might go wildly wrong—bison tripping, slipping, and goring one another while being transported in their containers is one big worry—and all the ways they've tried to ensure that doesn't happen.

Now Mike Miller, who founded and runs the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, where all this commotion is taking place, steps before the microphones and explains why he has devoted decades of his life to this day.

"Bison," Miller says, "are my religion."

YOU DON'T HAVE TO tithe to the Church of Bison to agree that no other animal in the history of the United States has been burdened with such symbolic importance. When Europeans first arrived in North America, the continent held an estimated 50 million bison—then called buffalo, for their similarities to the African and Asian buffalo, although they are not close relatives. For the infant United States, the animal was an emblem of plentitude and power. When, for example, snooty French naturalist Comte Georges-Louis de Buffon proclaimed that all American animals were smaller than Old World species because the New World was inherently decadent, Thomas Jefferson pointed out that one American bison was four times larger than the entire list of European quadrupeds put together—saying, in essence, Take that, Frenchy.

Then came bison near-death and resurrection. Through the 19th century, the United States slaughtered bison by the million, mostly to deny Native American tribes an animal they depended on for food and shelter. By the time bison appeared on the buffalo nickel, in 1913, scientists had declared the species all but extinct.

Instead, it was rescued. Today there are 400,000 bison in North America. You can barely take a hike in Yellowstone without tripping over one of them; bison burgers are on menus from Bozeman to Taos to Telluride.

But the bison standing in the Alaska morning cold—these aren't those bison. These are other bison: the wood bison.

A bison cow in a squeeze chute, about to be radio collared.

"The wood bison," says Canadian bison expert Wes Olson, who is helping stage this ruminant relocation, "is *Bison bison athabascae*. The Plains bison is *Bison bison bison*. The wood bison is bigger than the Plains bison. It is the largest land animal in North America."

Learning that there's a whole giant American animal you've never heard of is unsettling. It's like being told, Sure, Mt. Everest is tall but here's this other mountain that's even taller. Or, the Golden State Warriors' Steph Curry is a great basketball player but here's this other guy who's even better but nobody knows about him.

That is the thing about wood bison: They are full of surprises.

MONITORING THE TRUCKS and wooden chutes and waiting bison is Miller, executive director of the AWCC. The wood bison story is populated by a large cast of passionate, bison-loving people. Miller may be the most passionate of all.

In Miller's account, the story begins with a eureka moment akin to Newton and the apple, Archimedes in his bath. In 1992, an Alaska Department of Fish and Game wildlife biologist named Bob Stephenson was traipsing around the country near Fort Yukon, in eastern









Clockwise from left: Student artist Clifford Benjamin; biologist Tom Seaton; sign of the times; bison shipping containers.

Alaska. Stephenson noted that the area was rich in sedges. That was interesting, he thought: Sedges are a preferred food of bison, are often associated with bison, yet Alaska had no bison.

Stephenson began doing research. He discovered that a century ago, the mountains of northwestern North America had supported a bison known as the wood bison. It was larger than the Plains bison, with darker hair and a more pronounced hump. Like its Plains cousin, it had triumphed over a near-death experience. Never as numerous as the Plains bison (peak population probably maxed out at 125,000), it was deemed extinct by 1941. But then, in 1957, Canadian national park officers, flying over northern Alberta, discovered one remnant purebred herd. For bison fans, this was the equivalent of stumbling on the lost continent of Atlantis. And over the next decades, Canada protected these last wood bison to ensure that they thrived. The wood bison population rebounded.

That was Canada. But Stephenson had been talking to Alaska native elders, some of whom remembered bison from their youth. Their tales and, soon, fossil evidence indicated that wood bison had once lived in Alaska too. Wouldn't it be wonderful, Stephenson argued, if they lived there again?

As for Mike Miller, he had been fascinated with bison

> One wildlife biologist said it's as if "a bison-size hole in the Alaska ecosystem had been filled."



from his Southern California childhood. When he was 27, he moved to Alaska and bought some property in the Matanuska Valley. He also purchased six Plains bison. He then bought 200 acres of land south of Anchorage and moved himself and his bison there. He decided to open a wild game preserve where Alaska tourists could see big animals, like bison and, later, musk ox and reindeer.

Then Miller heard about Bob Stephenson and the wood bison. Miller wanted his own wood bison and managed to acquire 13 animals from Canada. By then, the state of Alaska was acquiring wood bison too—but had no place to put them. Miller volunteered his wildlife center. Bison arrived, then more bison, eventually 137 cows, calves, and bulls. And there they stayed. And stayed.

Miller is nothing if not devoted to wood bison, extolling their health ("You don't find cancer in wood bison because their immune systems are so strong") and their poop ("an excellent fertilizer"). But even with aid from the state and from private conservation and hunting organizations, supplying food and medical care to 150 bison for nearly 10 years proved taxing. "I never thought they would stay that long," Miller says. "Never."

THE BISON'S NEXT STOP is a cargo terminal at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. We're now standing at the edge of the runway watching the bison truck arrive and the bison container be offloaded onto a forklift and slid into the gaping maw of a C-130 cargo aircraft. Then we catch our own flights on those small planes that fly everywhere in Alaska, shadowing the cargo plane toward its next stop, the village of Shageluk, 300 miles to the northwest.

The flight reveals an infinity of snowy hillsides and hummocks, bare groves of willow and birch, frozen curling rivers, and far, far off, mountain ranges rising white and angular as icebergs. It is a landscape that clears the mind to ponder the next chapter in the wood bison story.

For as it turned out, it was not easy for Alaska to find a suitable wilderness home for its wood bison. They required the right habitat: forests and meadows with lots of sedges and grasses to eat. They required remoteness.

Eventually, three possible locations were proposed; out of them, Shageluk was chosen. Then the entire project nearly imploded. In Canada, the wood bison is a threatened species. Once released into the States, it would become a threatened species here too. And by law it would be nearly impossible to log or mine anywhere near it.

To the project's opponents, this was a deal breaker. The government would be importing foreign bison that would steal jobs from honest Alaskans. One state representative had to reach back to Ancient Greece to express the depth of the betrayal. "They are Trojan bison," he charged. "Once we allow them through the gates, they will destroy our country from within."

UP IN SHAGELUK, Alaska Fish and Game biologist Tom Seaton and Canadian naturalist Wes Olson are prepping for the bison's arrival, fencing in the meadow that will be the bison's home, setting up feeding stations. They are able to do this because, at the last minute, state and federal governments devised a work-around to the Trojan bison quandary, designating the wood bison an "experimental population" not subject to the Endangered Species Act.

Seaton, a Montanan turned Alaskan, has been in charge of the project for the past five years. His dual role as biologist and pilot will let him monitor the herd from both the ground, using radio collars, and the air. Olson has spent much of his life working with wood bison, most recently transporting a herd to Siberia for a Russian naturalist creating a Pleistocene Park inhabited by Ice Age animals: It is believed that the wood bison are the closest living descendants of the now-extinct steppe bison, *Bison priscus.*

As for the village of Shageluk, it's awaiting the bison with a mix of expectation and anxiety. Shageluk has about 80 residents, nearly all of them Native Alaskans. It has a beautifully weathered old Episcopal Church, St. Luke's; a hexagonal *kashim,* or community center; and a pretty setting on a hillside above the Innoko River. No roads connect Shageluk to anywhere: In summer, it is reachable by river or air, in winter by air or snowmobile or dogsled—in some years, it is a stop on the Iditarod sled-dog race.

At the crest of the hill is Innoko River School, handsome and modern and home to Shageluk's ace basketball team, the Innoko River Raiders. Here I get to watch principal and teacher Joyanne Hamilton teach a wood bison curriculum to her class of third through tenth graders. They already know about the wood bison's social structure: matriarchal, with older cows leading herds of other cows and calves, and bulls living solo or in small bachelor groups. They know that the wood bison has the second warmest hair of any mammal, musk ox being first. Now they are going over wood bison behaviors—which, as it happens, they have been able to study on YouTube.

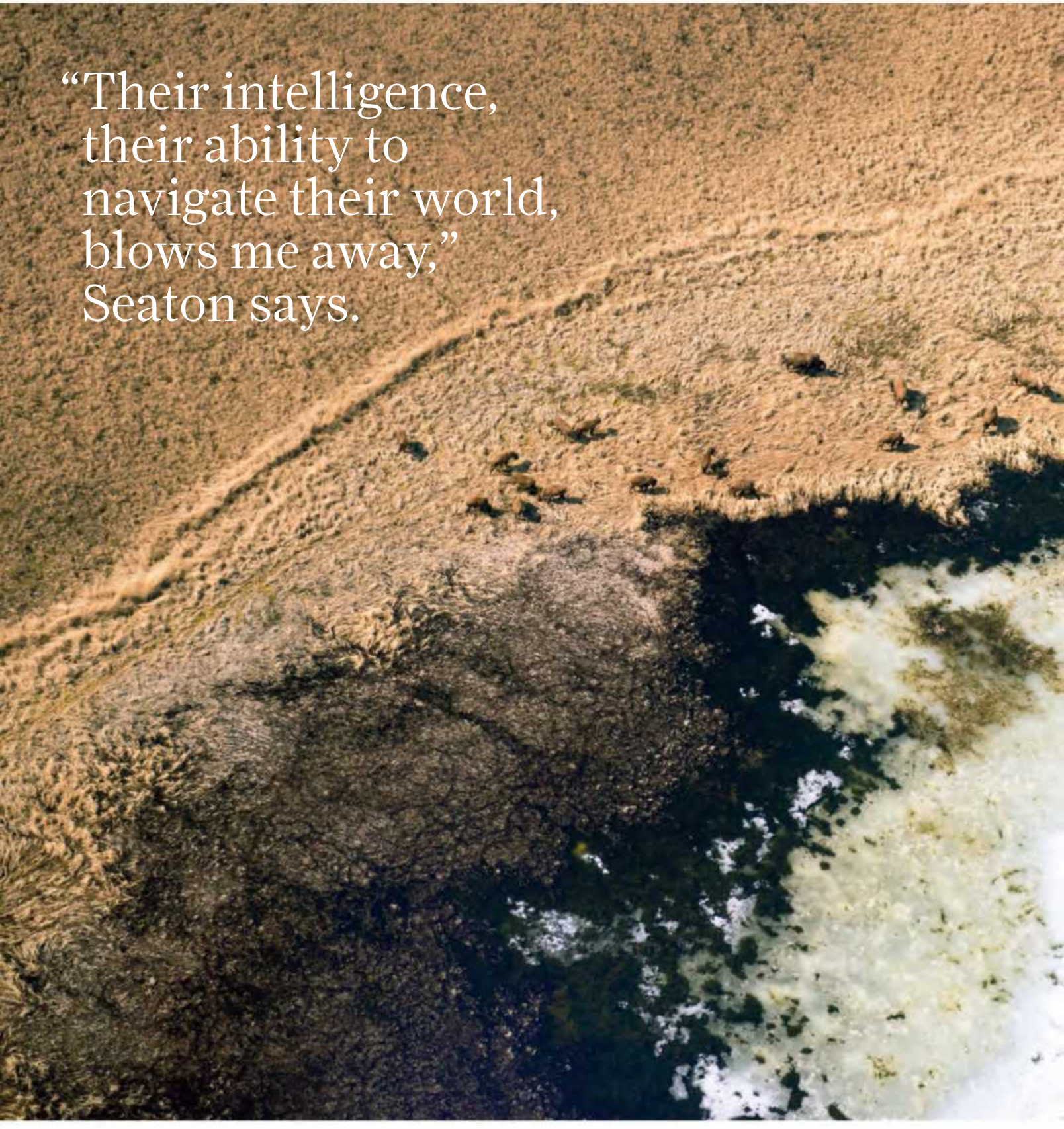
"Posturing," Joyanne Hamilton calls out. "What is that?"

"Acting all big and muscly."

"Wallowing?"

"When a bison rubs its back on the ground."

After the class is over, Hamilton tells me that Shageluk was divided about accepting the bison. Although wood bison are native to Alaska, they are not, apparently, native to this part of Alaska. In the village's Deg Xinag dialect, there is no word for bison. Nor is there a village tradition of hunting it, as there is for hunting moose. Hamilton says people worried: What if the bison attack their dogs or interfere with hunting moose?



"Their intelligence, their ability to navigate their world, blows me away," Seaton says.



Cows and calves eat in a meadow near their release point.

That's why, Hamilton says, it's so important that her students learn to understand the wood bison project. "I tell the kids, 'You're going to be the voters,'" Hamilton says. "'You'll take over the management of the herd.' And the kids are either going to say, 'This is the best adventure ever,' or 'What were you guys thinking?'"

THREE DAYS LATER, the cargo plane has made all of its flights; all 100 bison have arrived. Now it's time for them to meet the meadow that will be their new home, at least for the next few weeks.

The meadow lies near the Innoko River. We snowmobile out to a staging area to watch the arrival. The bison container is forklifted into place, an exit ramp slides to the snowy ground. The back door opens. The bison step out. What they resemble is any group of travelers deplaning after an arduous flight. Some bound down the ramp, overjoyed to have arrived at their destination. Others walk slowly, warily, a little dazed. Soon the meadow is filled with bison.

That night, there's a celebration of the Wood Bison Restoration Project at the Shageluk kashim. Seventy or so of us, villagers and visitors, line up for the kind of food you get at community potlucks: lasagna, slightly limp green salad, brownies, and, because this is Alaska, moose sausage. After dinner, it's time for acknowledgments, starting with two respected elders, Arnold Hamilton from Shageluk and Ken Chase from nearby Anvik, both of whom lobbied hard for the bison.

As the speeches go on, you think about the pros and cons of the project, whether the bison are in fact worth all the decades and work and money that have been lavished on them. For Shageluk, there's the hope that when the herd increases enough, the bison can be hunted. And that the animals might become a tourist attraction that would draw visitors to the village.

For biologists like Tom Seaton, Alaska has a species it has needed for more than a century. It is, he says, as if "a bison-size hole in the ecosystem had been filled."

Now it is Seaton's turn to speak. He stands in the center of the hall. "Thank you, Shageluk," he says. "I want to say it again. Thank you."

THE STORY IS NOT quite ended. As challenging as the bison's journey has been, the true test is to come, when the animals are released from their fenced-in meadow. The bison have lived their lives cared for in a wildlife center. How will they fare in actual wilderness?

Some threats were climatic. A late-season storm could drop snow deep enough that the animals would struggle and die. Spring thaw could thin the ice over the Innoko River; if a herd tried to cross, they would break through and drown. But, Seaton worries, the

most powerful threat is more global: The bison simply would not adjust to their new home. "That's where past reintroductions have failed," Seaton says. "Animals don't recognize that this new habitat is a good place for them to be."

The weeks pass. Seaton builds a bison buffet line, a long path leading from the fenced-in meadow into the adjacent woods, lined with feeding stations filled with the sedges the bison like to eat. He lines the path with bison feces to convince the bison they are following a route other bison have already used.

The big day comes. Seaton opens the fence. The 100 bison charge forward. Seaton tries to keep ahead of them on his snowmobile. In that moment, all Seaton's worries rise over him. "All this stuff can be perfect," he recalls thinking. "You can go through years and years of maintaining the animals and moving them here. And you release them and the whole thing can fail."

But it didn't. Eventually the stampede slows. Over the next days, the herd divides into smaller herds, which begin exploring their new home, 5 miles, 10 miles, but always returning to near the release site.

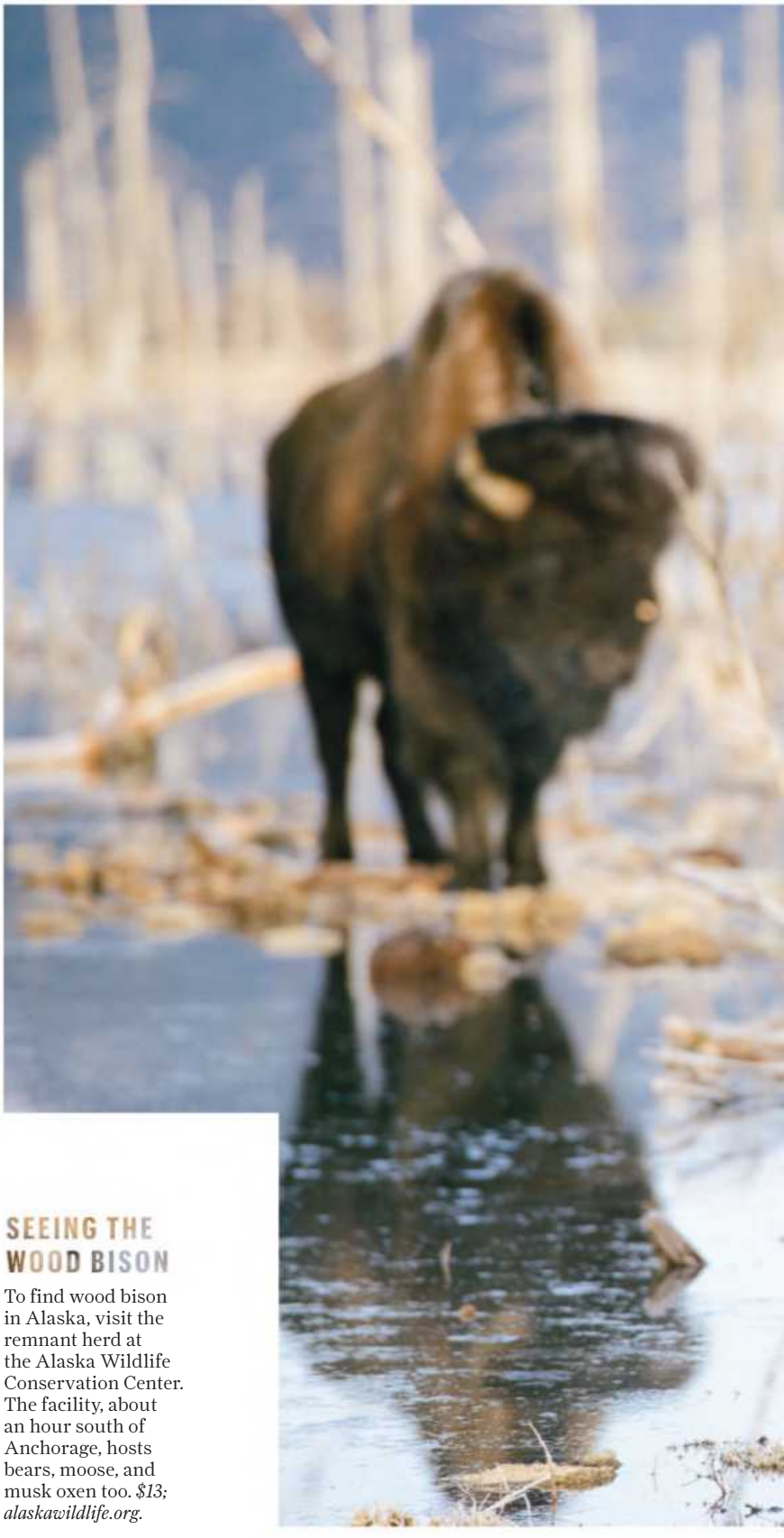
Seaton keeps track of them, for weeks, for months. There are losses. One small calf who couldn't keep up curls in the snow to die. Bison do break through the thinned river ice and drown. But new bison are born too. A couple of months later, 30 bulls are brought up the Innoko River by barge. Bison bulls and cows mate; there should be new bison born in the coming spring.

Two stolid bulls at the AWCC await a new home.

And now, eight months after the release, the bison face their first full winter in Shageluk. Seaton hopes this winter will be mild, but even if it isn't, he has faith. "They have exceeded any expectation I had," he says. "I had respect for them before, but now I have more. Their intelligence, their ability to navigate their world, just blows me away."

He will admit to wistfulness that the bison are thriving without him. "It's been bittersweet," Seaton says. "It's been a little emotional now that they've broken away from me and are in the care of Mother Nature."

Back at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, where the wood bison's journey began, Mike Miller is also adjusting to the loss of his quadruped charges. "It's like winning the Super Bowl," he says. "You feel happy but at a loss because now the stadium is empty." He is, he says, glad that his center still hosts a dozen or so wood bison deemed too old to make the journey to Shageluk. In this way, the Church of Bison still abides. "I spent so many years getting up early to take care of the bison," he says. "Having these guys still here keeps me sane."



SEEING THE WOOD BISON

To find wood bison in Alaska, visit the remnant herd at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center. The facility, about an hour south of Anchorage, hosts bears, moose, and musk oxen too. *$13; alaskawildlife.org.*



DIGITAL BONUS More places to wildlife-watch in the West: ***sunset.com/wildlife*.**



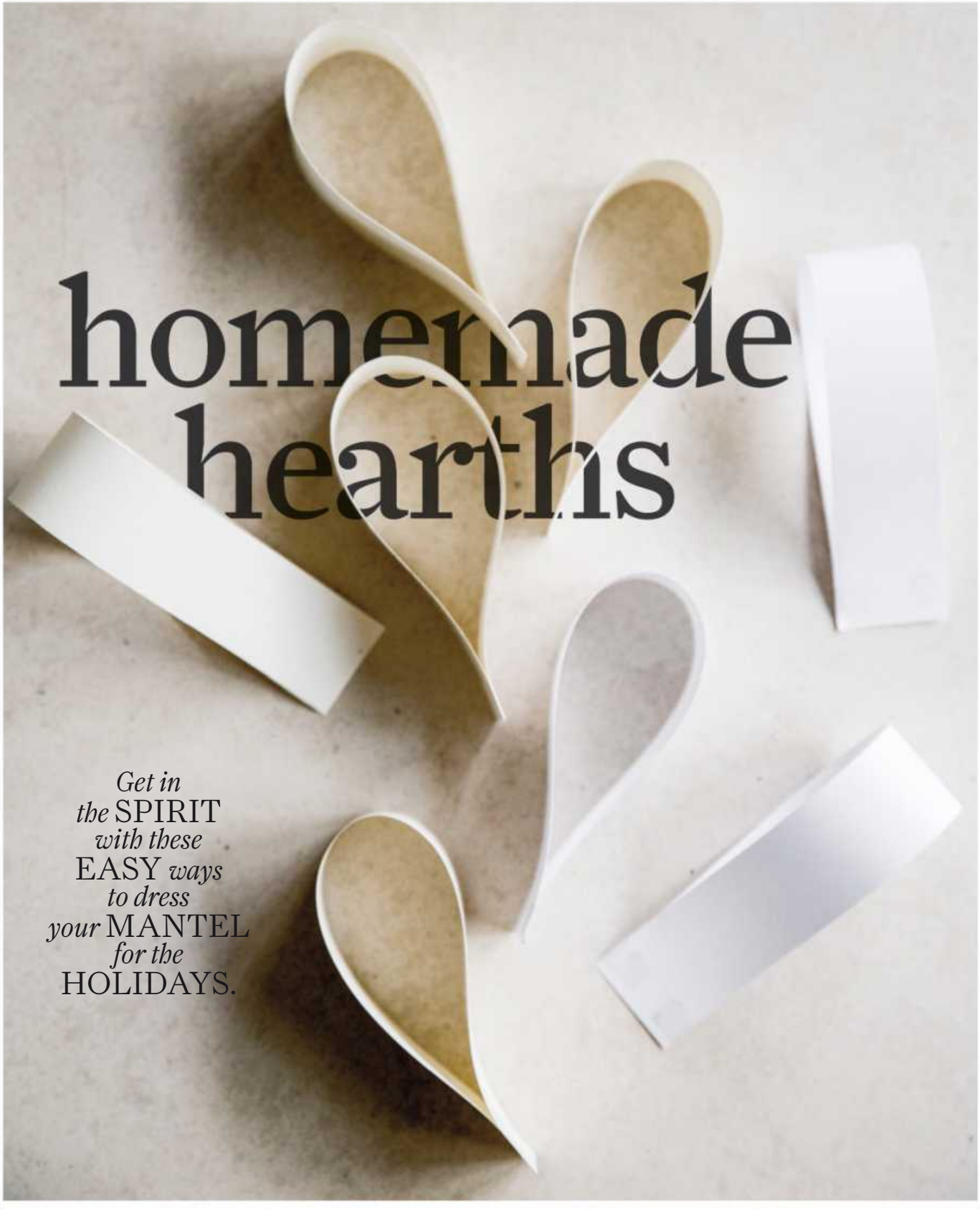
All is calm

Let a black-and-white palette be the antidote to tinsel and flashing colored lights. Spray-paint inexpensive nutcrackers white, then place them at attention beneath a paper-loop wreath. If you happen to have dark walls, this look can be especially pleasing.

BY JOANNA LINBERG | PRODUCED BY MIKHAEL ROMAIN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS J. STORY

homemade hearths

Get in the SPIRIT *with these* EASY *ways to dress your* MANTEL *for the* HOLIDAYS.



DIY: Cut white and ivory paper in 1- by 8-inch strips. Bring the ends together to form a teardrop shape; tape or staple to secure. Hot-glue the loops to a wreath form, layering them tightly. *Nutcrackers and candlesticks, Michaels. Stockings, Serena & Lily. Moroccan rug, Elsie Green House & Home.*





Fresh and unfussy

For a take on the holidays that feels more Western than sprigs of holly do, pile succulents in a trough surrounded by your everyday ceramic vases. Tuck more succulents into a premade olive-leaf wreath.

DIY: Trim each succulent's stem to about 1½ inches. Push a 12-inch length of floral wire through the stem near the base. Position the succulent on the wreath, then wrap the wire around to the back, twisting it to secure. For heavier specimens, tie the wire before twisting it for more stability. *Trough, Tina Frey. Pillows by Flint, available at The Perish Trust. Basket, Elsie Green House & Home. Vases, Heath Ceramics and Ruby's Clay Studio and Gallery.*


WASHINGTON
WRITERS



Merry and bright

The holidays are your chance to go all out, if that's your thing. Try a riotous mix of silver and gold, faux snow, and ornaments, all crowned by a pompom wreath. Collect colorful glass balls in large vases and arrange fiberfill into drifts of faux snow where oversize ornaments can nestle.

DIY: Hot-glue pompoms to a wreath form, starting with the largest and varying color and size. *Ornaments, Fantastico. Threshold Bar Cart, Target. Stockings, The Stocking Place. Pom-Pom Charm with Pin (on stockings), Serena & Lily. Tall glass vase, Crimson Horticultural Rarities. Silver tree, Crate & Barrel.*



DIGITAL BONUS
From DIY wreaths to tabletop trees, our complete guide to holiday home decor: *sunset.com/holiday-decorating*.



Western wonderland

Unleash all your cabin fantasies with a lush woodland scene. Weave a mixed eucalyptus- and olive-branch garland between birch vases filled with dusty miller and green berries. String pinecones on twine, and hang a wreath of shed deer antlers to complete the scene.

DIY: For the wreath, arrange four or five antlers so the points interlock to form a circle. Liberally hot-glue the antlers to one another at the interlocking points. For the pinecone garland, screw fish eye hooks into the base of the pinecones (you may need to drill a hole in the cones first). Thread twine through the eyes. *Antlers, eBay. Rocking chair, Past Perfect. Pillow, Cindy Ciskowski. Oil Bottle, Elsie Green House & Home.*

CRAB FEAST

Holidays in the West mean sweet, tender Dungeness crab on the table. Here are recipes worth celebrating, from some of our favorite chefs.

By Amy Machnak
Photographs by Iain Bagwell



FOOD STYLING: KAREN SHINTO; PROP STYLING: NISSA QUANSTROM



CRACKED CRAB *with* BUTTER *and* CITRUS

GETTING THE MOST FROM CRAB

For whole crab, count on at least one 2-lb. crab per person. Pick the meat from the shell to enjoy on its own or use in recipes (cheaper and fresher than buying cleaned lump crabmeat). Add the golden crab "butter" (edible innards) and cream-colored fat to sauces and soups, and save the shells for broth. A 2-lb. crab will yield about 1½ cups meat (about 25 percent of its weight).

CRABCAKE EGGS BENEDICT




CRAB
POSOLE
SALAD
CRAB
BISQUE



CRAB *and*
SPINACH
GNOCCHI

DIGITAL BONUS Our best meals to feed a crowd: *sunset.com/groupmeals*.

Cullen Campbell, Crudo, Phoenix

CRAB *and* SPINACH GNOCCHI

SERVES 4 / 2 HOURS

Despite being quite a distance from an ocean, chef-owner Cullen Campbell serves impeccable seafood. He simmers these plump gnocchi, but the mixture is also excellent pan-fried as crabcakes.

GNOCCHI

1 tbsp. olive oil, divided
2 lbs. spinach, rinsed well and large stems trimmed
About ¾ tsp. *each* kosher salt and pepper, divided
1 lb. shelled cooked Dungeness crab, large pieces broken up
1 large egg plus 1 large egg yolk
½ tsp. red chile flakes*
½ cup flour

BUTTER SAUCE AND SERVING

⅓ cup dry white wine, such as Pinot Grigio
¼ cup minced shallot (about 1 medium)
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tbsp. whipping cream
½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
Large pinch *each* kosher salt and pepper
1½ tsp. Vietnamese fish sauce or *colatura* (Italian fish sauce)*
Hunk of parmesan cheese

1. Make gnocchi: Heat ½ tbsp. oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add half of spinach and a pinch *each* salt and pepper. Cook, tossing often, until barely wilted and still bright green, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain in a colander. Repeat with another ½ tbsp. oil, remaining spinach, and a pinch more of salt and pepper. Let cool in colander.
2. Gently squeeze excess liquid from cooled spinach. Chop ⅓ cup finely and set the rest aside.
3. Mix crab, chopped spinach, whole egg and yolk, chile flakes, and ¼ tsp. *each* salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Add flour and mix thoroughly until it holds together like a soft dough.
4. Dip 2 small spoons (soup spoons are too big) in very hot water. Scoop 1 scant tbsp. dough with one spoon. Set second spoon upside down over dough and press firmly, then scoop underneath dough and onto second spoon. Repeat motion with first spoon. Scoop back and forth until you have a compact quenelle of dough. Alternatively, using wet hands to keep dough from sticking, and firmly roll it into scant 1-tbsp. balls. Set quenelles or balls on a baking sheet as you work, then chill while you make sauce.
5. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Meanwhile, make butter sauce: Cook wine, shallot, and garlic in a large frying pan over medium-low heat until wine has almost evaporated and shallot is softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add cream and cook until simmering. Whisk in butter, a few cubes at a time, until melted and creamy. Whisk in salt, pepper, and fish sauce. Remove from heat to a warm spot. Let sit, whisking occasionally, until ready to serve, up to 30 minutes.
6. Reduce heat under boiling water to an active simmer. Drop in gnocchi and cook until they float, 3 to 4 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer to a plate. Meanwhile, reheat reserved spinach in a microwave.
7. Divide spinach among four plates. Top each with 6 to 8 gnocchi and drizzle generously with butter sauce. Serve with cheese hunk and a grater.

* *Campbell likes smoky Controne hot pepper (find at markethallfoods.com) and salty, intense colatura (amazon.com).*

MAKE AHEAD *Formed gnocchi, up to 1 day, chilled, or up to 2 months, frozen. (Freeze on baking sheet, then pop off and seal in a resealable plastic bag. Boil directly from the freezer, 5 to 6 minutes.) Spinach, up to 1 day, chilled. Butter sauce, up to 1 day, reheated in a bowl set over steaming water, whisking often.*

PER SERVING 535 Cal., 62% (333 Cal.) from fat; 35 g protein; 37 g fat (19 g sat.); 23 g carbo (4.2 g fiber); 1,077 mg sodium; 268 mg chol.

Jordan Davis, Herringbone Restaurants (three locations), Southern CA

CRACKED CRAB *with* BUTTER *and* CITRUS

SERVES 4 / 2½ HOURS

Jordan Davis grew up in San Francisco, devouring Dungeness every Christmas Eve. Although you can buy and serve precooked crab, the cooking process isn't difficult, and the resulting flavor, texture, and freshness can't be beat. (For how to cook, clean, and crack crab, go to *sunset.com/crabvideo*.) Use leftover meat and shells for bisque, page 75.

4 live medium Dungeness crabs (about 2 lbs. each) wrapped in paper by a fish shop so they're easier to handle
½ cup unsalted butter
1½ tsp. Old Bay seasoning
1 tsp. lemon juice
½ tsp. kosher salt
Assorted regular lemons, Meyer lemons, and limes, plus flat-leaf parsley sprigs

1. Bring a canning pot filled with water to a boil, about 30 minutes. Using tongs, grasp rear of crab (claws away from you). Lower crab into pot; cover. Repeat with 1 more crab; cover. Bring water back to boiling, then cook 8 minutes for 1½- to 2-lb. crabs, 10 minutes if larger. Or, in a large stockpot, boil 1 crab at a time (5 minutes for the smaller size, 8 for the larger).
2. In a small saucepan, melt butter with Old Bay over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low and skim foam until only clear liquid is left. Stir in lemon juice and salt.
3. Using tongs, transfer crabs to a colander to drain and cool; meanwhile, cook remaining crabs. Set cooled crabs belly up on a rimmed baking sheet, then clean and crack.
4. Serve on a platter with citrus, parsley, and the seasoned clarified butter.

PER SERVING 426 Cal., 45% (193 Cal.) from fat; 51 g protein; 21 g fat (12 g sat.); 2.5 g carbo (0 g fiber); 1,087 mg sodium; 230 mg chol. GF/LC

Joshua Delgado, Alderbrook Resort and Spa, Union, WA

CRABCAKE EGGS BENEDICT

SERVES 6 TO 8 / 1½ HOURS, PLUS 1 HOUR TO CHILL

Dungeness is always on the menu at the Alderbrook, set right on Washington's Hood Canal. These outstanding Benedicts skip the customary English muffin to showcase just crisp crabcake, egg, and hollandaise.

CRABCAKES AND POACHED EGGS

- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ½ tsp. minced garlic
- ¼ cup *each* finely chopped celery and onion
- Pinch of red chile flakes (optional)
- ½ tsp. flour
- ¼ cup whipping cream
- 1 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 lb. shelled cooked Dungeness crab
- 3 tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp. *each* kosher salt and black pepper
- ⅓ cup *panko* (Japanese-style bread crumbs)*, plus 1½ to 2 cups for coating
- 6 to 8 large eggs (to match the number of crabcakes)
- 3 tbsp. neutral vegetable oil, such as canola, grapeseed, or safflower

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp. hot sauce, such as Tabasco
- ¼ tsp. *each* kosher salt and white pepper
- ½ cup warm, melted unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp. chopped chives

1. Make crabcakes: Melt butter in a large frying pan over low heat. Add garlic, celery, and onion and cook, stirring often, until translucent but not browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Add chile flakes and flour and cook, stirring, until flour smells toasted, about 30 seconds. Stir in cream and parsley. Remove from heat and let mixture cool.

2. Meanwhile, gently squeeze water from crab over a colander. In a medium bowl, whisk together mayonnaise, egg yolk, mustard, salt, and black pepper. Stir in ⅓ cup panko, the crab, and cream mixture.

3. Put about 2 cups panko on a large plate. Form crab mixture into scant ½- or ⅓-cup patties (for 6 or 8 crabcakes, respectively). One at a time, set patties in panko, press lightly to help bread crumbs adhere, and turn with a thin metal spatula; press lightly on second side. Transfer to a large plate, cover, and chill at least 1 hour and up to 1 day.

4. Meanwhile, poach eggs: Bring a large, deep frying pan of lightly salted water to a boil. Reduce heat to maintain a low simmer. Crack 1 egg into a glass measuring cup, hold spout close to water's surface, and let egg slip gently into water. Repeat with rest of eggs. Cook until eggs are softly set, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer as done to a large bowl of ice and cold water.

5. Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Cook crabcakes, turning only once, until dark golden brown on both sides, 8 to 10 minutes total. (If making 8 crabcakes, you may need to cook in batches; if so, wipe out pan and add a fresh 3 tbsp. oil for second batch.) Transfer to a plate and put in a 200° oven to keep warm.

6. Make hollandaise sauce: Set a bowl of lukewarm water to the side of stove. Add yolks to a slightly smaller bowl, then set bowl of yolks over (but not touching) a saucepan of barely simmering water (lift bowl periodically to check that water is not boiling). Whisk in lemon juice, mustard, hot sauce, salt, and white pepper. Whisking constantly, drizzle in melted butter—a few drops at first, then in a thin, slow stream, until incorporated. Keep whisking until thick enough for the whisk to leave faint trails. Set bowl in bowl of lukewarm water and cover; whisk occasionally until ready to serve. If sauce breaks (you'll see oily butter separating out), slowly whisk in 1 tbsp. cold water or cold whipping cream.

7. Reheat poached eggs: Immerse eggs in water that's just hot to touch (but not hot enough to cook them further) until they feel warm, about 5 minutes. Lift each out with a slotted spoon and rest, still in spoon, on paper towels for a moment to drain briefly.

8. Put crabcakes on plates and slip a poached egg on each. Spoon about 1½ tbsp. hollandaise sauce on top of each, and sprinkle with chives.

**Find panko with regular bread crumbs at your grocery store.*

MAKE AHEAD *Crabcakes, through step 2, up to 1 day, chilled. Poached eggs, up to 1 day, covered and chilled in water. Hollandaise sauce, up to 1 hour at room temperature, covered. To reheat sauce, set the bowl over a saucepan of warm (120°) water and gently rewarm for 5 minutes, whisking every now and then.*

PER SERVING 402 Cal., 70% (283 Cal.) from fat; 22 g protein; 32 g fat (13 g sat.); 8.8 g carbo (0.5 g fiber); 504 mg sodium; 429 mg chol. LC

Aniedra Nichols, Elway's Cherry Creek, Denver

CRAB POSOLE SALAD

SERVES 2 AS A MAIN COURSE, 4 AS A FIRST COURSE / 20 MINUTES

The ocean flavor of Dungeness meets earthy hominy in this twist on the Mexican soup called *posole*. "Dungeness crabmeat has a natural orange-red hue from the shell that makes the salad look vibrant," says chef Aniedra Nichols. You could also use shrimp, scallops, or fat flakes of Pacific cod.

DRESSING

- About 2 tbsp. lime juice
- ½ tsp. minced serrano chile
- 1 tsp. minced shallot
- 2 tbsp. *each* grapeseed or safflower oil and extra-virgin olive oil
- About ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- Pinch of pepper

SALAD

- 8 oz. shelled cooked Dungeness crab (about 1¼ cups)
- 1 watermelon radish, halved and thinly sliced, or 4 or 5 round red radishes, thinly sliced
- 3 cups thinly sliced napa cabbage
- ⅔ cup canned white hominy, drained and rinsed
- ⅓ cup loosely packed cilantro leaves
- ½ avocado, cut into ½-in. cubes
- 2 green onions (green parts only), thinly sliced

1. Whisk dressing ingredients together in a small bowl. Season to taste with more salt and lime juice. Set aside.
2. Make salad: Put crab, radish, cabbage, hominy, cilantro, avocado, and half of green onions in a medium bowl. Add dressing and toss gently just to coat.
3. Divide salad between 2 or 4 plates, arranging some crab pieces and some radishes on top. Sprinkle with remaining green onions.

PER SERVING 518 Cal., 63% (324 Cal.) from fat; 29 g protein; 37g fat (4.7 g sat.); 19 g carbo (6.7 g fiber); 760 mg sodium; 86 mg chol. GF

Jordan Davis, Herringbone Restaurants

CRAB BISQUE

SERVES 6 (MAKES 5 CUPS) / 1½ HOURS

If you have shells from a cracked-crab feast, make this delicious bisque the following day. "Slow and low is the only trick to cooking it," Davis says. Top with leftover shelled cooked crab, if you have some—it's not absolutely necessary.

- 12 oz. cooked cleaned Dungeness crab shells, reserved from Cracked Crab (recipe page 73) or purchased from a fish shop*
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 qt. crab-poaching liquid, reserved from making Cracked Crab (page 73), or a mix of 1¼ cups *each* bottled clam juice and water
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 1½ cups finely chopped onion (1 medium)
- 1 cup finely chopped celery (5 or 6 stalks)
- ¼ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup dry white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 cups whipping cream, plus 2 tbsp. for topping
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 to 4 oz. shelled cooked Dungeness crab (½ to ⅔ cup), saved from Cracked Crab (page 73) or purchased from a fish shop (optional)
- ¼ cup fresh herbs, such as chives, tarragon, or parsley; or a mix

1. Put crab shells, bay leaves, and crab-poaching liquid in a medium pot. Bring to a simmer, covered, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until broth has a gentle but distinctive crab flavor, about 1 hour. Strain broth through a fine-mesh strainer. If using crab-poaching liquid, return to pot and boil, uncovered, until reduced to 2 cups, 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside.
2. In another medium pot, heat oil over low heat. Add onion, celery, and bell pepper and cook, covered, stirring often, until very soft and translucent but not browned, about 15 minutes.
3. Add wine and tomato paste to vegetables and cook over medium heat, uncovered, until wine has reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Add 2 cups cream and the crab broth and simmer over low heat 15 minutes, uncovered, to meld flavors and thicken a bit.
4. Put six small, shallow soup bowls in a 200° oven to warm. Whip remaining 2 tbsp. cream into soft peaks.
5. Strain soup through a fine-mesh strainer into a large bowl and stir in butter and salt. Ladle about ⅔ cup into each soup bowl. Top with a mound of crab, if using, a small spoonful of whipped cream, and a sprinkle of herbs.

**Call your fish shop a few days ahead for crab shells, as they're not always available.*

PER SERVING 436 Cal., 87% (380 Cal.) from fat; 6.4 g protein; 43 g fat (23 g sat.); 9.4 g carbo (1.4 g fiber); 602 mg sodium; 140 mg chol. GF/LC

FROM THE EDITORS OF MONEY MAGAZINE

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TRADITIONS

THE SUNSET COOKIE SWAP

From across the West, you sent us your best recipes. Here they are, along with one from us in return, to sweeten your holidays.
By Margo True

FOOD STYLING: KAREN SHINTO; PROP STYLING: KELLY ALLEN

Photographs by **ERIN KUNKEL**

ELSA'S CHOCOLATE-DIPPED MACAROONS

MAKES ABOUT 20 COOKIES / 1½ HOURS, PLUS 1 HOUR TO CHILL

These macaroons are the most delicious we've ever tasted in the Test Kitchen. The recipe comes from Karen Dannenbaum of Topanga, California, who inherited it from her mother, Elsa, an outstanding cook. Of all the recipes Elsa left behind in her handwritten notebooks, "this was one of her best, and a family favorite," Dannenbaum says.

12 oz. sweetened flaked coconut, divided
⅔ cup powdered sugar
¼ cup plus 1 tbsp. cream of coconut*
1½ oz. (2½ tbsp.) neufchâtel cheese
2 tbsp. coconut flour*
1 large egg white
½ tsp. vanilla extract
Pinch of sea salt
6 oz. semisweet chocolate

1. Preheat oven to 325° with racks in upper and lower thirds. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Put 7 oz. (2⅔ cups) flaked coconut and the powdered sugar in a food processor and whirl 30 seconds. Add all remaining ingredients except chocolate. Whirl until coconut is well chopped, scraping down inside of processor once.
3. Pour remaining 5 oz. (1¾ cups) flaked coconut into a medium bowl. Drop a generous tablespoonful of dough into bowl and gently toss to coat with coconut. Roll into a ball between your palms, then roll in coconut again and set on baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough and flaked coconut, setting cookies about ½ in. apart (they don't spread much).
4. Bake until golden around the top and edges, switching position of pans halfway through, 25 to 30 minutes total. Slide parchment with cookies onto a cooling rack to cool completely.
5. Break or chop chocolate into small chunks, put in a small microwave-safe bowl, and heat in 20-second bursts until almost melted. Stir to melt completely. If very liquidy, let cool until as thick as sour cream.
6. Line a baking sheet with waxed paper or parchment. Hold one cookie at a time by the top and dip the bottom into chocolate about ½ in. up the side of cookie. Set on baking sheet and chill 1 hour to set chocolate.

**Find cream of coconut and coconut flour at well-stocked grocery stores.*

MAKE AHEAD *Up to 2 weeks, chilled airtight.*

PER COOKIE 148 Cal., 49% (73 Cal.) from fat; 1.8 g protein; 8 g fat (6.7 g sat.); 32 g carbo (1.7 g fiber); 61 mg sodium; 1.9 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/V



ABOUT THE COOKIE SWAP
Last year, our readers shared their most beloved cookie recipes with us on Facebook—and after a flurry of baking in the Test Kitchen, we selected these as the best.

CHOCOLATE THUMBPRINTS with CARAMEL and SEA SALT

MAKES ABOUT 40 COOKIES / 1½ HOURS

The starting point for this cookie was a recipe that reader Colette Tihista-Longin of Great Falls, Montana, found in a recipe collection at a yard sale. "I adapted it to include caramel and sea salt. It's a hit every year at our cookie exchange." Despite the cookie's name, a wooden spoon makes a neater depression than your thumb will.



COOKIES

1 cup flour
Generous ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
¼ tsp. salt
½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
⅔ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg yolk
1 tbsp. heavy whipping cream
1 tsp. vanilla extract
½ cup sparkling sugar or powdered sugar for rolling, or just leave plain

CARAMEL*

1 cup granulated sugar
6 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into tbsp.-size chunks
½ cup heavy cream
¼ tsp. fine sea salt, plus about ½ tsp. for sprinkling

1. Make cookies: Preheat oven to 350°. Sift flour, cocoa powder, and salt into a bowl. In another bowl with a mixer on medium speed, beat butter and granulated sugar until pale and fluffy. Reduce speed to low and add egg yolk, cream, and vanilla. Gradually beat in flour mixture.
2. Scoop dough into rounded 1-tsp. portions and roll into balls, then roll balls in sparkling or powdered sugar to coat. Place 2 in. apart on parchment paper–lined baking sheets. With end of a thick-handled wooden spoon, gently press an indentation into center of each cookie. Bake until cookies are just set, about 10 minutes. (The depressions tend to fill in a bit as they bake, so as soon as they're out of the oven, give them another press with the spoon if necessary.) Slide parchment with cookies onto cooling racks and let cool. If you've used powdered sugar, sift a little more onto the cookies.
3. Make caramel: Put granulated sugar in a large nonstick frying pan; spread evenly. Heat over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Sugar will form clumps but eventually will melt and turn into a dark, amber-colored liquid, about 6 minutes. As soon as it's liquefied, reduce heat to medium-low. Add butter and stir until incorporated. Stirring constantly, drizzle in cream. Boil 1 minute, stirring, then remove from heat and stir in ¼ tsp. sea salt. Scrape into a bowl and let cool completely.
4. Assemble cookies: Spoon about ¼ tsp. caramel into each cookie, then sprinkle with a few grains of sea salt.

* *You'll have more caramel than you need, but that's never a bad thing—it's great on ice cream. Don't be tempted to cook a half-batch of caramel, as it won't cook right and will seize up.*

MAKE AHEAD *Caramel, up to 5 days, chilled (let soften at room temperature before spooning into cookies). Baked cookies, up to 1 week, chilled airtight.*

PER COOKIE 104 Cal., 48% (49 Cal.) from fat; 0.7 g protein; 5.5 g fat (3.4 g sat.); 13 g carbo (0.3 g fiber); 45 mg sodium; 21 mg chol. LC/LS/V

CHOCOLATE LACE SANDWICH COOKIES

MAKES ABOUT 50 COOKIES
2 HOURS, PLUS 2 HOURS TO FIRM

"I call these the 'backache' cookies because I always make a double batch, sitting hunched over at the table," says Fran Pepoon of Roseville, California. She has been baking these chocolate cookies, which have a subtle hit of orange and vanilla, every Christmas for 30 years, adapting them over time from a recipe given to her by a friend. Two tips: The cookies tend to stick and spread, so be sure to use a nonstick baking-sheet liner or parchment, and don't bake more than 12 cookies on each sheet.

1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
1 cup sugar
½ cup salted butter, melted
1 large egg, beaten with a fork
1½ tsp. vanilla extract
2 tsp. orange juice
3 tbsp. flour
½ tsp. salt
6 oz. semisweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 325° with racks in upper and lower thirds.
2. In a medium bowl, mix oats, sugar, and butter together with a wooden spoon. Stir in egg until well blended, then vanilla and orange juice. Add flour and salt and stir to mix. Batter will be somewhat thick.
3. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper or nonstick baking liners. Drop batter by half-teaspoonfuls onto sheets, at least 2 in. apart (cookies will spread), up to 12 per sheet. Bake until golden brown, switching positions of sheets halfway through, 8 to 10 minutes total.
4. Cool cookies on baking sheets until just holding their shape, about 2 minutes (don't wait until they're completely cool, as they will be harder to remove). With a thin metal spatula, gently transfer to cooling racks and let cool completely.
5. Put chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl and heat in 20-second bursts until almost melted. Stir to melt completely.
6. Thinly spread chocolate on flat side of half of cookies. Sandwich with another cookie and let harden on racks, about 2 hours at room temperature.

MAKE AHEAD *Up to 1 week, airtight at room temperature.*

PER COOKIE 58 Cal., 46% (27 Cal.) from fat; 0.6 g protein; 3 g fat (1.8 g sat.); 7.7 g carbo (0.4 g fiber); 38 mg sodium; 9.1 mg chol. LC/LS/V

Bake & freeze

All these cookies (except macaroons) can be frozen for up to 2 months, saving you valuable holiday time. (The chocolate discolors on the macaroons.) As soon as cookies cool, package in airtight, rigid containers, with waxed paper or parchment between layers. If cookies have gooey fillings, freeze them on baking sheets first, then transfer to containers. Keep chocolate cookies separate; their flavor migrates.



DONNA'S MOLASSES COOKIES

MAKES ABOUT 45 COOKIES
1 HOUR, PLUS 2 HOURS TO CHILL

"This recipe is from my mother-in-law's box of typed 3- by 5-in. cards, handed down from *her* mother," says Beryl Schwartz of Ojai, California. "Nothing reminds us of the holidays like the aroma of molasses wafting through the house!" Schwartz adds cloves and ginger for extra spice and rolls the cookie balls in turbinado sugar for crunch.

¾ cup vegetable shortening*
1 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1½ tsp. baking soda
2 cups flour
2 to 2½ tsp. cinnamon
2 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. ground cloves
⅓ cup molasses (not blackstrap)
2 tsp. finely shredded fresh ginger
About ¾ cup turbinado sugar for rolling

1. In a medium bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed, beat shortening with granulated sugar until fluffy. Scrape down bowl and beat in egg.
2. In a small bowl, dissolve baking soda in 2 tsp. warm water. Sift flour and ground spices into a medium bowl.
3. Beat baking soda mixture into shortening, then add flour mixture in alternating batches with molasses and fresh ginger. Cover with plastic wrap and chill 2 to 3 hours and up to overnight.
4. Preheat oven to 350°. Scoop dough into 1-tbsp. balls. Roll in turbinado sugar.
5. Set balls on greased baking sheets at least 2 in. apart. Bake until dry-looking around edges, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets just until set, then transfer to cooling racks.

**Look for "trans fat–free" on the label.*

MAKE AHEAD *Baked cookies, up to 1 week, airtight at room temperature.*

PER COOKIE 86 Cal., 33% (28 Cal.) from fat; 0.7 g protein; 3.1 g fat (1.4 g sat.); 14 g carbo (0.3 g fiber); 45 mg sodium; 7.4 mg chol. **LC/LS/V**

TOUT SWEET RUSSIAN TEA CAKES

FROM A PRO

MAKES ABOUT 40 COOKIES / 2½ HOURS, PLUS 4 HOURS TO CHILL

As we were soliciting cookie recipes for this story, we also asked which cookie you *wished* you knew how to make. The consensus: the melt-in-your-mouth butter-and-nut cookies called Russian tea cakes or Mexican wedding cakes. This version is from Yigit Pura of Tout Sweet Pâtisserie, in San Francisco and Palo Alto, CA. We love it for its extreme crispness and toasty brown-butter flavor, and because it's not too sweet; most of the sugar is on the outside.

1 cup (140 g*) hazelnuts
1 cup plus 6 tbsp. (310 g) unsalted butter, cut into ½-in. chunks, at cool room temperature
⅓ cup plus 2 tbsp. (90 g) granulated sugar
¾ tsp. kosher salt
Scant 1 tbsp. (10 g) vanilla-bean paste*
1 tbsp. cognac or brandy
3 cups plus 2 tbsp. (435 g) flour
About 1½ cups powdered sugar for rolling

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Toast hazelnuts on a rimmed baking sheet until light golden brown and skins start to split, 8 to 10 minutes. Rub warm nuts in a kitchen towel to remove most of skins (it's okay if some stick). Let cool and chop coarsely.
2. Using a stand mixer with the paddle attachment (or a handheld mixer with beaters; cookies will be slightly crumblier), beat butter, granulated sugar, and salt on medium speed until evenly mixed and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together vanilla-bean paste and cognac. Scrape into butter mixture and mix to incorporate.
4. On low speed, gradually mix in flour, scraping bowl as needed. Add hazelnuts and mix 30 seconds more.
5. Immediately scoop cookies into 1½-tbsp. (25 g) portions and roll into balls. Chill, covered, at least 4 hours and up to 2 days.
6. Preheat oven to 325° with racks in upper and lower thirds. Stack a baking sheet on a second sheet (to help cookies get evenly golden brown). Repeat with 2 more baking sheets. Line top sheet in each stack with parchment paper and set chilled cookie portions on parchment about 1 in. apart.
7. Bake cookies 20 minutes. Switch positions of pans and rotate each 180°; then bake until medium golden brown, almost like biscotti, 25 to 30 minutes more. Slide parchment with cookies onto cooling racks and let cool completely.
8. Put powdered sugar in a large, wide bowl, then roll cookies in powdered sugar. Repeat, lightly pressing sugar onto cookies to form a thick, fluffy coat.

**Pura recommends weighing ingredients on a kitchen scale, since it's more precise. Find vanilla-bean paste at surlatable.com.*

MAKE AHEAD *Through step 5, up to 2 days, chilled airtight, or 2 months, frozen (thaw overnight in fridge before proceeding). Baked cookies, 2 to 3 days, airtight at room temperature, or up to 2 months, frozen.*

PER COOKIE 146 Cal., 52% (76 Cal.) from fat; 1.7 g protein; 8.6 g fat (4.2 g sat.); 16 g carbo (0.6 g fiber); 30 mg sodium; 17 mg chol. LC/LS/V



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WEEKNIGHT COOKING



TAKE-TWO TURKEY NOODLE SOUP with GINGER and CHILE

SERVES 4 TO 6 / 25 MINUTES

After eating piles of turkey flavored with the usual sage and oregano, you'll be grateful for leftovers that taste totally different: This soup is fiercely gingery (to revitalize you after a holiday-meal stupor). If you're not a ginger lover, cut back the amount to a few slices.

- 12 cups reduced-sodium or homemade chicken broth
- About 2 oz. fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced (⅓ cup)
- 8 oz. cooked turkey
- 9 oz. fresh Chinese-style egg noodles or 5 oz. dried*
- 6 oz. fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced (2½ cups)
- 6 oz. broccolini, large stems halved lengthwise, then all of it cut into 1-in. lengths
- 2 tbsp. hoisin sauce
- 1 to 1½ tbsp. Asian chili garlic sauce
- 2 cups coarsely chopped cilantro leaves and tender stems
- 8 green onions, thinly sliced

1. Bring broth and ginger to a boil, covered, over high heat. Meanwhile, tear turkey into large shreds; set aside.
2. Add noodles, mushrooms, and broccolini to broth (if using dried noodles, cook noodles first for 2 minutes, then add vegetables). Cook noodles until almost tender, about 2 minutes for fresh and 4 to 5 minutes for dried.
3. Keep soup at a simmer and add turkey. Stir in hoisin and chili garlic sauces, then most of cilantro and green onions. Ladle into large, deep bowls and top with remaining cilantro and green onions.

—Margo True

**Find fresh noodles in the refrigerated section of most grocery stores and Asian markets, and dried noodles in your grocery store's Asian-foods aisle.*

PER SERVING 288 Cal., 15% (43 Cal.) from fat; 28 g protein; 4.7 g fat (1.4 g sat.); 33 g carbo (3.1 g fiber); 626 mg sodium; 93 mg chol.

FOOD STYLING: ROBYN VALARIK

Photographs by JEFFERY CROSS

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TACOS ON THE GO
Fold the scramble into a tortilla and add lettuce.

SPICY CHORIZO and LIMA-BEAN SCRAMBLE

SERVES 4 TO 6 / 30 MINUTES

This Mexican-style skillet dinner makes a good brunch too. If you can find large yellow canned limas—a variety known as butter beans—choose those over the smaller green limas; they have a deeper, richer flavor.

12 oz. fresh Mexican chorizo*, casings removed
About 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
1 red bell pepper, cut into 2-in. strips
1 can (15 oz.) lima or butter beans, drained and rinsed
3 large eggs
Salt and pepper
1 bunch cilantro with leaves and tender stems, chopped (about 2 cups)
½ cup crumbled *queso fresco* or other mild white cheese
8 corn tortillas, warmed*
Bottled hot sauce

1. Cook chorizo in a large frying pan over high heat, breaking up chunks with a spoon and stirring occasionally, until cooked through, about 6 minutes (to keep it from sticking, you may need to add a little water and turn down the heat). With a slotted spoon, lift chorizo from any oil and put in a bowl; set aside.
2. Add enough oil to pan to make about 2 tbsp. fat. Add onion and pepper and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until onion is beginning to brown, about 10 minutes. Return chorizo to pan and stir in beans.
3. With a wooden spoon, make a well in the center. Crack eggs into well, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and let cook undisturbed 15 seconds; then use a spatula to softly scramble. Fold eggs into the chorizo-bean mixture. Top with cilantro and cheese and serve with tortillas and hot sauce. —*Jessica Battilana*

* *Avoid the very soft type sold in plastic casings; it doesn't taste great and tends to dissolve when cooked. To warm tortillas, wrap in a kitchen towel and microwave them for 1 minute.*

PER SERVING 597 Cal., 57% (340 Cal.) from fat; 26 g protein; 38 g fat (10 g sat.); 43 g carbo (6.2 g fiber); 1,127 mg sodium; 159 mg chol. **GF (with GF chorizo)**



WARM CHICORY STEAK SALAD with AGRODOLCE DRESSING

SERVES 4 / 40 MINUTES

An Italian sweet-and-sour sauce made with vinegar, honey, and raisins—*agrodolce,* literally "sour/sweet"—softens the bitterness of radicchio and escarole. Serve this salad right away, while it's crisp.

2 tbsp. *each* balsamic vinegar and red wine vinegar
2 tbsp. honey
1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary leaves, divided
1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
¾ tsp. pepper, divided
¾ to 1 lb. New York strip steak
2 tbsp. olive oil, divided
⅓ cup minced shallots
¼ cup golden raisins
¾ lb. radicchio, cored and cut lengthwise into 1½-in.-wide wedges
1½ qts. loosely packed escarole, cut crosswise into 1½-in.-wide ribbons
1 large Bosc pear, cut lengthwise into slim wedges
¼ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves

1. In a small bowl, combine vinegars, honey, ½ tsp. *each* rosemary and salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper; set aside.

2. Heat a 12-in. frying pan over medium-high heat. Season steak all over with remaining ½ tsp. *each* rosemary, salt, and pepper, then rub with ½ tbsp. oil. Cook steak in pan, turning once, until medium-rare, 8 to 9 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and tent with foil.

3. Reduce heat under pan to medium. Add remaining 1½ tbsp. oil and the shallots; cook, stirring often, until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in raisins, then add radicchio and vinegar mixture. Cook, stirring occasionally, until radicchio just starts to wilt (wedges will break apart), 2 minutes; with slotted spoon, transfer radicchio to bowl with steak. Add escarole to pan and cook until it's barely wilted, about 1 minute. Remove from heat.

4. Slice steak crosswise, trimming fat, and return to bowl with radicchio mixture. Add escarole, pears, and parsley; toss to mix and transfer to a platter.

—Elaine Johnson

PER SERVING 432 Cal., 47% (204 Cal.) from fat; 24 g protein; 23 g fat (7.3 g sat.); 35 g carbo (6.1 g fiber); 479 mg sodium; 57 mg chol. **GF/LC/LS**



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In the SUNSET KITCHEN

TIPS FROM OUR TEAM

GIFT GUIDE

Calling all cooks

Family members and friends who love to cook probably don't need another 10-speed blender. These new tools, ingredients, and cookbooks will surprise and delight them (and even pay off for you in the form of some good eating in the new year).



CUSTOM ROLLING PINS
For the bakers who want to put a personal stamp on their gingerbread, this **laser-engraved rolling pin** is decorated with a blackbird, chevron, or circle design. *$62; healdsburgshed.com.*

NEXT-LEVEL OLIVE OIL
Test Kitchen staffers are all hoping for a bottle of freshly pressed olive oil, aka *olio nuovo,* in their stockings. The unfiltered finishing oil has a bright taste and keeps just a few months. It's great on bread, braised greens, and polenta. Try milder **Séka Hills** *($18/250 ml.),* **Calivirgin** *($30/500 ml.),* or intense **Katz December's New Oil** *($28/375 ml.),* all sold at *markethallfoods.com.*

COVETABLE COOKBOOKS
There may be no cookbook more Western this season than ***Citrus*** (Ten Speed Press; $20), with sunny-flavored recipes like tangerine sticky ribs and orange and rosemary polenta cake. Alice Waters, legendary owner of Chez Panisse, shares how to make her tahini and more in ***My Pantry*** (Pam Krauss Books; $25). ***Theo Chocolate*** (Sasquatch Books; $25), from the Seattle chocolate maker, is an ode to the good stuff, with tips and recipes for Big Daddy Marshmallow Bars and cacao nib granola.

SPICE EXPLORATION
For the cook hot to master a new cuisine, there's the **Bollywood Theater Indian Masala Spice Set.** It comes with three freshly ground blends—plus recipes—formulated by chef Troy MacLarty of Portland's crazy-popular Bollywood Theater restaurants. *$20; reluctanttrading.com.*

DIGITAL BONUS Candies, infused liqueurs, and more edible gifts to make: *sunset.com/foodgifts.*

KITCHEN CONVERSATION

HOLIDAY FOOD TRADITIONS

We asked our *Sunset* recipe testers to tell us their favorite dishes for family gatherings. Share yours at *sunset.com/kitchenconversation.*

"My husband Russ's cioppino on Christmas Eve."
—MARLENE KAWAHATA

"Sauerkraut, in honor of my German grandmother."
—MARYANNE WELTON

"My Serbian mom's *burek*—filo dough layered with a cottage cheese, cream cheese, and egg filling."
—MELISSA KAISER

"Little meatballs with a cranberry, currant jelly, and wine sauce, to go with latkes at Hanukkah. Kind of retro, but there was never ever a party on my husband's side without them."
—SARAH EPSTEIN

"Turkey curry with inventive condiments—one for each of the ceramic dishes on my mom's lazy Susan."
—REBECCA PARKER

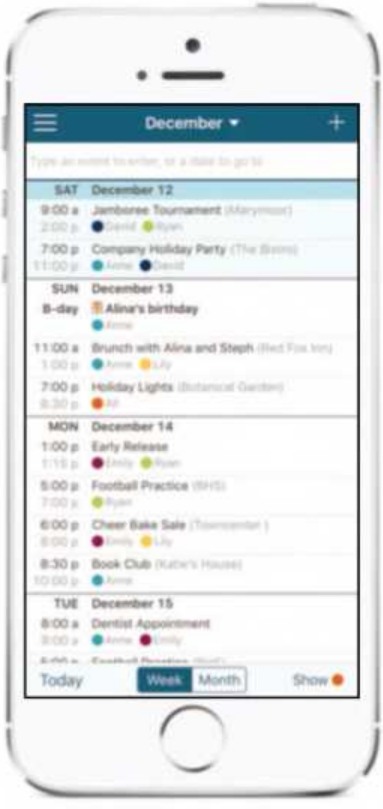
"While we open presents on Christmas afternoon, we eat Artichoke Nibbles, the old *Sunset* recipe my mom has been making since the '70s. Always a winner!"
—LENORE GRANT
(Get the recipe on sunset.com.)

FOOD STYLING: ROBYN VALARIK

Photographs by JEFFERY CROSS

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In the SUNSET KITCHEN

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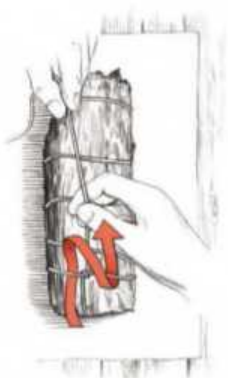
Stuffed boneless roasts tied with continuous looping knots (the way the butcher does it), rather than with individual crossties (the usual beginner's approach), cook more evenly and carve more neatly. If you can tie your shoes, you can master our simplified version of the butcher's technique. Try it on **Grilled Beef Tenderloin with Fresh Herbs**; **Pork Shoulder Roast with Figs, Garlic, and Pinot Noir**; or **Grilled Apricot-Stuffed Leg of Lamb** (get the recipes at *sunset.com/holidayroasts*).



1. Take a piece of kitchen twine 6 times as long as your roast and slip it under meat near one end. On top of roast, loop twine over and under itself, like the first part of tying shoes; pull it snug.



2. Wrap 1 end of twine under roast and pull it to top, 1 to 2 in. from first tie, holding spot on top in place with a thumb. Loop twine under the spot you're holding and pull tight. Repeat to end of roast.



3. Flip roast over. Going down length of roast, wrap twine over and under each cross loop, pulling it snug. Run twine over end of roast and knot at the first cross loop. Trim excess twine.

WE'RE LOVING ...

Festive ice creams

Proving that ice cream season is year-round, Portland's Salt & Straw has come out with a **holiday ice cream assortment**. Available at their shops in Portland and L.A. as well as by mail (if you're among their die-hard fans), the assortment features two lineups that do the Northwest and SoCal proud. In Portland, recipes and ingredients are local: Peppermint Cocoa, Bourbon Pecan Pie, Tequila Spiked Eggnog, Mincemeat Pie, and Congressman Blumenauer's Fruitcake. *$65/5 pints; saltandstraw.com.*



ILLUSTRATIONS: JOE McKENDRY

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Classic Sugar Cookies

4 cups sifted all-purpose flour (sift flour before measuring)
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 1/2 sticks butter or margarine, softened
1 1/2 cups C&H® Granulated Sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sift together flour, baking powder and salt; set aside.

In a large bowl, beat the softened butter with the sugar until fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla, beat well. Stir in dry ingredients, a third at a time, until all is incorporated for a smooth, stiff dough.

Using waxed paper lightly dusted with confectioners' sugar, roll out a portion of the dough into a 1/4 inch thick rectangle. Press cookie cutter of desired shape into dough. Trim away excess dough. Gently lift cut-out cookies from waxed paper and place on greased cookie sheets. Repeat rolling and cutting until all dough is used.

Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes or until cookies are firm and light golden brown. Remove from cookie sheet and allow to cool completely before decorating.



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HOLIDAY GAME NIGHT

SIP

How to make your party sparkle: Follow our plan for playing "guess the bubbly." *By Sara Schneider*

FROM THANKSGIVING through New Year's, people drink far more sparkling wine—from all over the globe—than they do any other time of year. Most of us, though, can't tell the difference between a cava (Spain's main bubbly), say, and any other bottle of bubbles. A little focused tasting of the main high-quality types available here—West Coast traditional-method sparklers, French Champagne, Spanish cava, and Italian prosecco—will quickly clarify the differences, reveal personal preferences, and turn a holiday gathering into a tasting party that will be fun for wine lovers and neophytes alike. We've come up with a plan.

Photographs by THOMAS J. STORY

FOOD STYLING: JEFFREY LARSEN; PROP STYLING: EMMA STAR JENSEN

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REVIEWS FROM OUR GUESTS

"We have traveled Europe quite a bit, but we have never had such a **unique experience** as we did cruising with Sunset. From the luxury ship to the incredible wine, we thoroughly relaxed and enjoyed ourselves on this exclusive Sunset experience."

— Sharri & Darrell Belisle

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The party plan

The evening has two parts: Guests first get acquainted with the different bubblies, then they taste them "blind."

Buy two different bottles of each type of sparkling wine, plus a lineup of hors d'oeuvres that make terrific pairings (see below). When guests arrive, set out some cold nibbles and pop open the first four bottles (one of each kind, with labels in full view). Pass out copies of our "Wines at a Glance" chart (page 96), which maps key traits among the sparklers, and have everyone smell and taste each to see if they can pick up the yeastiness in Champagne, the crisp dryness of the West Coast sparkler, or the faint rubber aroma in cava (quite appealing to some people). Prepare for surprises—who knew that, on average, Champagne is sweeter than good domestic bubbly?

Once everyone is familiar with the personality of each region's wine, bring out the last four bottles, bagged and numbered 1 through 4, for a blind taste test. Have partygoers rate their characteristics on the tasting sheet, from low to high. (Meanwhile, set out warm appetizers.) Finally, have the group take a stab at identifying the bottles—then reveal and toast the winning palates.

Shopping list

On the wine side, you need two bottles of each type of bubbly (our picks below are all classic versions of their style). For nibbles, traditional salty, spicy bites are great with sparklers; their bright bubbles cut through the richness.

Champagne

Champagne Pol Roger Brut Réserve "White Foil" *($50)*

Champagne Taittinger Brut La Française *($60)*

West Coast sparklers

Laetitia Brut Cuvée *(Arroyo Grande Valley; $25)*

Roederer Brut *(Anderson Valley; $22)*

Cava

Naveran Brut 2013 Cava *($17)*

Noa de Bohigas Cava *($28)*

Prosecco

Adriano Adami "Bosco di Gica" Brut Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG *($18)*

Ruggeri 2013 "Giustino B." Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG *($32)*

Bubble-friendly bites

Oysters on the half-shell with red wine vinegar mignonette

Potato chips

Deviled eggs

Mini blinis with crème fraîche and salmon roe

Cheese (brie, parmesan, and manchego) with crackers and a sweet-tart relish such as fig with balsamic vinegar

Crab and spicy tuna sushi rolls with wasabi and pickled ginger

Vietnamese shrimp spring rolls with red chile dipping sauce

Mini spinach quiches

Stuffed mushrooms

Bonus: Any of our recipes for crab dishes (see page 68) would be perfect with these sparkling wines.





WHY USE WINE GLASSES?

Sparklers are often served in tall flutes—ideal for preserving bubbles, less so for releasing aromas and flavors. Shallow coupes are adorable but lose bubbles too fast. Small white-wine glasses compromise between revealing a wine's personality and hoarding its effervescence.

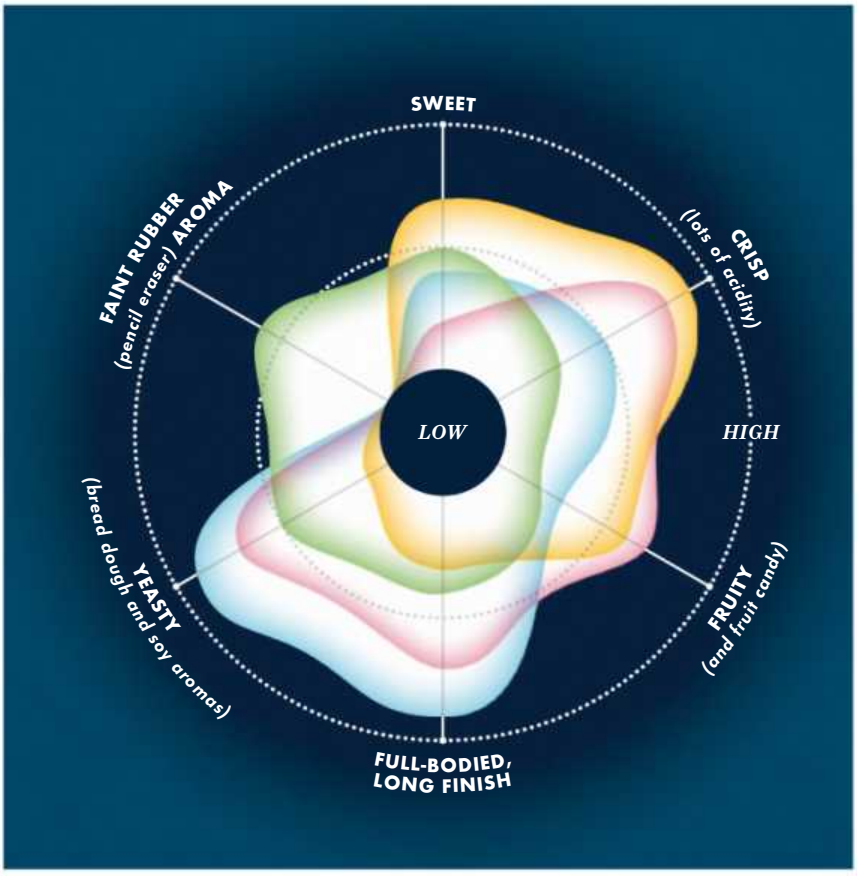
Game Night Tasting Sheet

Pour a taste of sparkling wine from each of the blinded bottles. Smell and taste each one, considering the characteristics listed below, and rate each low, medium, or high. Then compare the profile you've come up with for each wine to the "Wines at a Glance" chart (below). Try to identify which is the Champagne, West Coast sparkler, cava, and prosecco.

	WINE 1			WINE 2			WINE 3			WINE 4		
Wine profile	LOW	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED	HIGH
Sweet												
Crisp *(lots of acidity)*												
Fruity *(and fruit candy)*												
Full-bodied, long finish												
Yeasty *(bread dough, soy aromas)*												
Faint rubber *(pencil eraser)* aroma												

Wines at a glance

This chart overlays the profiles of four types of sparkling wine so you can quickly tell which is the sweetest, for instance (prosecco), or which has the yeastiest character (Champagne). The distinct marker for cava, as you can see, is a faint rubber aroma. Our chart is based on analyses done by Christian Roguenant, who has made sparkling wine on several continents (beginning in Champagne) and is now winemaker for Niven Family Wine Estates in Edna Valley, California. You can often catch him at *Sunset* events leading sparkling wine tastings. **NOTE:** Of these four types of sparkling wine, only prosecco is not made using the traditional Champagne method, which creates the bubbles through a second fermentation in the bottle—resulting in yeastiness from the lees (spent cells). Prosecco's second fermentation happens in a large tank, which accounts for its lack of complexity and yeast/soy character.



Cava

Prosecco

Champagne

West Coast sparkling *(traditional method)*

ILLUSTRATION: WALTER C. BAUMANN

DIGITAL BONUS Download pdfs of this "Game Night Tasting Sheet" for your party: *sunset.com/tastingsheet.*



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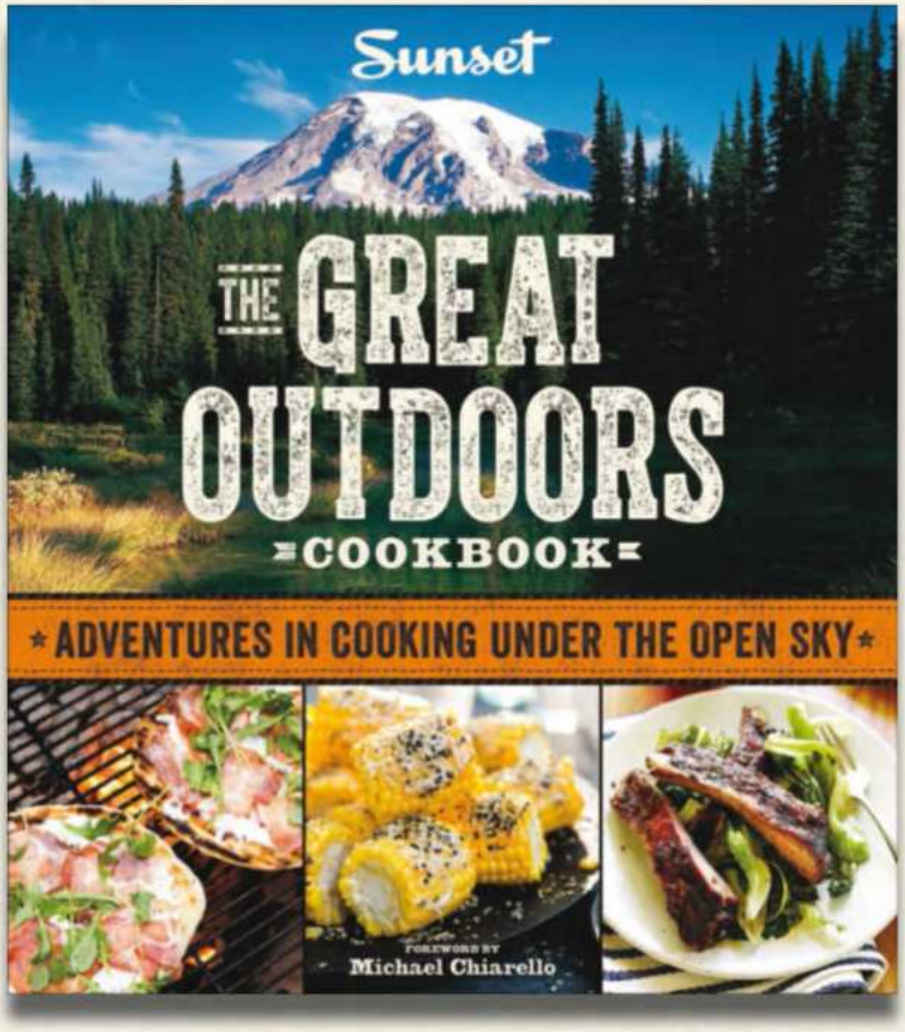
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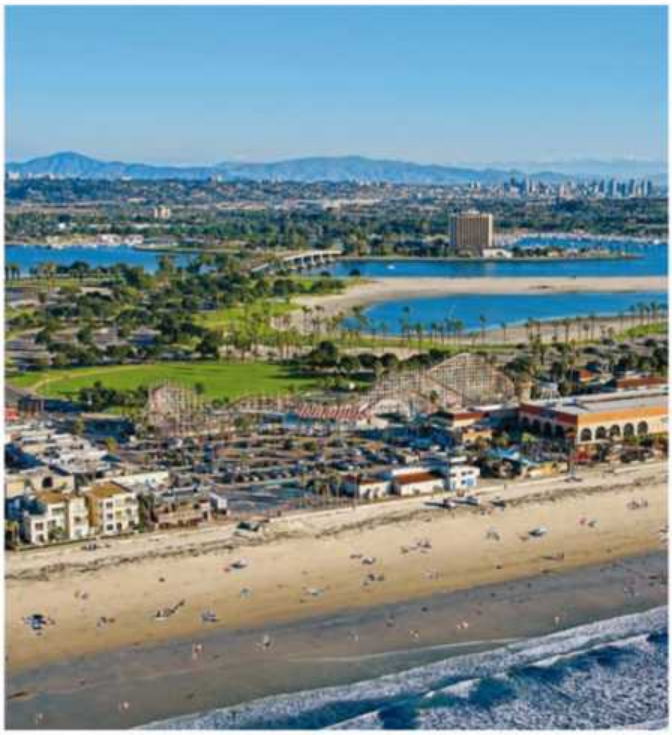
Q: I love sugar cookies, but all the sprinkles and frosting on top make them too sweet for me. Are there other ways to decorate them? —K.C., PHOENIX

DEAR K.C. No sprinkles?! You can easily add texture and festive designs to your sugar cookies by using cooking tools such as canelé molds, diamond-shape cookie cutters, and five-hole zesters.



Q: What fun destination can we take the kids to on break that won't be overrun with other vacationing families? —CAROL BLAKE, HOLLISTER, CA

DEAR CAROL There are definitely desirable destinations that won't make you feel like CGI extras in *The Lord of the Rings.* Many of the stars of the national park system, packed like sardine tins during the summer, have a more relaxed vibe in December. The Oregon Coast, Phoenix, and Monterey are all worth considering too. But our favorite at the moment is San Diego: The winters are mild, and you'll have the city's famed beaches pretty much to yourself. At most hotels, room rates are down and availability is up. The lines of summer have disappeared at the San Diego Zoo and its Safari Park, SeaWorld, and nearby Legoland. Need a round of holiday cheer? See *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* at The Old Globe theater in Balboa Park (Dr. Seuss was a local). Or check out the ice-skating rink—on the beach—at the Hotel del Coronado (for more on this, see page 20).



Over the holidays, San Diego's Mission Beach is blissfully uncrowded.

Q: What are the best options for replacing large glass windows in a midcentury home? —D.O., GREENBRAE, CA

DEAR D.O. Midcentury homes often have windows with narrow stiles (the vertical sides of the sash), making them tricky to replace with current offerings. For energy efficiency, single-thickness glass can be replaced with "low-e" glazing, says J. Gordon Turnbull, principal at the historic preservation architectural firm Page & Turnbull. If total replacement is a must, suppliers like Hope's *(hopeswindows.com)* have steel and bronze framing with proper dimensions to fit.



Q: What do you make of the many restaurants now serving glasses of wine poured from a keg? —JEFF MILLER, DENVER

DEAR JEFF We say, Bottoms up. Kegged wine solves a problem with ordering bottled wines by the glass—not knowing how many days the bottle has been sitting around open. Too often, it's too many, and your wine comes to the table slightly oxidized. Putting wine in kegs also shrinks the carbon footprint of your drink. Napa-based Free Flow Wines, the largest company "kegging" in the country, says each reusable stainless steel keg it circulates will, on average, reduce the carbon footprint of the wine poured from it by 96 percent and avoid 2,340 pounds of landfill. It's a wine win-win.

Email your questions about Western gardening, travel, food, wine, or home design to *asksunset@sunset.com*.

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